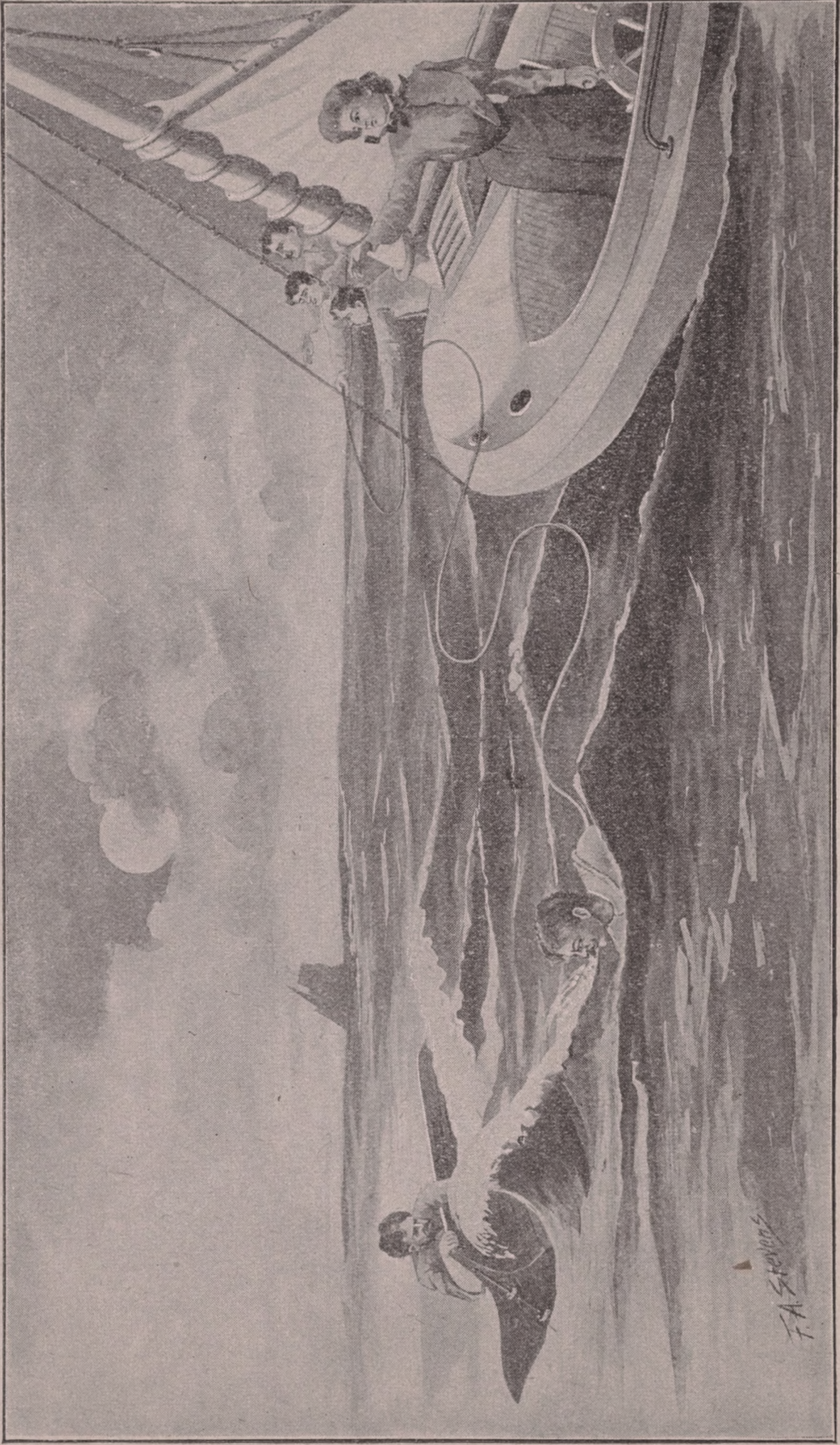


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The House of the Honeymoon

THE HOUSE OF THE HONEYMOON



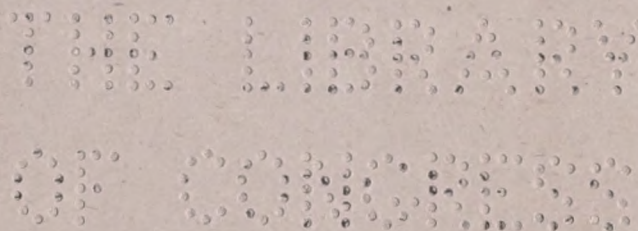
“THE BATTLE FOR ANOTHER’S LIFE.”—Page 23.

THE HOUSE OF THE
HONEYMOON

A Story

BY HARRY ESKEW

Horace Stewart Quillin



H. B. WIGGIN'S SONS CO.

BLOOMFIELD, N. J.

1903

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The House of the Honeymoon.

CHAPTER I.

THE sunshine of that beautiful June day, performed with notable vigor its two-fold function: to give light and heat. Its light, radiant, all-penetrating, all-illuminating, hovered over the great city, shining upon the busy streets, pervading the offices in the tall buildings, forcing through the defences of rich mansions, sending cheerful gleams into fine tenements, and would not be excluded from even the darker regions where squalid misery gathered its rags around it in wretched courts and alleys. It was glorious—or would have been had it not been for the heat. The streets palpitated. The people, reeking at every pore, moved slowly, taking advantage of even the tiniest spot of shade. Drivers were extra cautious about hurrying their heavily burdened teams. Business was almost at a standstill, except in the tall buildings where the workers were grateful for a breath of the upper and cooler air. It was bad enough, that heat, in the homes of the rich, and in the fine tenements, but in the close, unventilated courts and alleys it was almost unbearable. Weak children gave up the brief, hard struggle for life, and gasped their way into eternity. Half-nourished men and women, and those enfeebled by dissipation, were stricken as from a giant's blow.

Both the light and the heat of that June sunshine invaded a little room on the third floor of a Twenty-Third street building, a room which served as a studio for Miss Alicia Flemming, "Artist in Decoration." The light brought into full effectiveness the soft green walls, partly covered with sketches of idealized interiors; the

little bookcase, with its assortment of volumes on the various phases of decorative art; the cosy-corner, heaped with couch pillows, illustrating the latest designs and materials in that interesting branch of woman's work; the centre-table covered with specimens of domestic embroidery, including, as did the couch pillows, examples of the raffia embroidery on burlap just coming into what promised to be a really great vogue; and, most striking of all, the little desk at which Miss Flemming was now sitting, helplessly staring at some scribbled sheets upon which she was trying to express her ideas of "Fads and Fancies in Modern Decoration," with a view to their publication in the next issue of "The Homemaker."

The heat was responsible for the depressing effect of so many combinations of color as were gathered into that one small room, and for the look of baffled weariness which clouded the fair face of Miss Flemming.

For Miss Flemming was, indeed, fair to look upon. Without disparagement of her work, it may be truly said that she was more decorative in person than she was by profession. Nature had done for her what art can never do for anything. She was an embodied bouquet. The dreamy blue of the violet was in her eyes, the pink flush of the carnation glowed on her cheeks, the crimson of roses tinged her lips, the snow of the lily lay on her broad, full forehead, and the grace of the lily was in her small, lithe figure. Her light-brown hair, in which the sunlight made glints of gold, fell in fluffy waves down to her temples, creating a fitting frame for the face.

Just now there were wrinkles of perplexity in that broad forehead, and the rosy mouth was drawn wearily at the corners. Little Miss Flemming was pondering. Would her depressed brain ever again recover its usual alertness and elasticity, so that she could finish her writing? Would there ever be demand enough for her services so that she could afford to close her studio during the sultry season, and run away to the seashore or the mountains? Had she not missed it when, through much privation, she had labored to fit herself for the sphere she was now attempting to fill? A year ago she had opened her studio, and she had not been without patronage; but, except for the small help from the magazine, whose editor had been one of her teachers, she would have found difficulty in paying her way. Since coming to the city she had lived quietly, dressed economically, and worked very hard. Her health had been fairly good, and her ambitious spirit had sustained her through all her trials. But the strong-

est spirit will have moments of doubt and depression, and little Miss Flemming was temporarily under a cloud.

Presently she arose, went to the corner wash-stand, and bathed her troubled face with cool water. She was in the act of drying it, when a footstep sounded in the hallway, stopped at the door, upon which was given a firm knock. Hastily dabbing the remaining moisture from her countenance, she opened the door, and found herself confronted by a pleasant-looking but rather embarrassed young man.

"This is Miss Flemming's studio?" he inquired,—as solicitously as though her name did not stare at him from the door-panel.

"It is; and I am Miss Flemming."

"Ah, thank you. I am fortunate to find you in. The told me at the Homemaker office that you were seldom here in the afternoon, but I ventured to call."

He handed her his card.

"Step in and be seated, Mr. Hawthorne. What can I do for you?" Miss Flemming whirled her desk chair around, and sat opposite him with her best business air.

The young man hesitated a little. Miss Flemming was hardly the sort of person he had expected to meet. He found it difficult to state his business while his eyes were on her face. So, after a brief stare, he looked out of the window and was brought back to common things by the view of ugly walls, roofs and chimneys.

"The fact is, Miss Flemming," he began,—“the fact is that I am in a peculiar situation, and am looking for unusual assistance. My mother and I live together. My father died about two years ago. He was devoted to his business, and had strict notions as to economy. He drew the household purse-strings so tight that, although he was abundantly able to support a handsome establishment, my mother's dream of some day living in a home which approached her ideal could never be realized. I don't wish to give you a false impression of father. He was a good man, and always kind in his treatment of mother and me; but he had the fever for accumulation, and couldn't bear to part with money beyond what seemed to him a reasonable necessity.

“His will left his all to mother and me. I quitted college to take up the business, and I determined that mother's last days should be brightened by the fulfillment of all her long-repressed wishes. I had an architect take her ideas of a suitable house, and put them into form. I gave the contract to competent builders. Owing to labor troubles, the completion of the house was greatly delayed.

but it is now receiving the finishing touches.

"We are brought to the question of decorations and furnishings. Here again mother has her own ideas. She has given years of thought and study to the subject, and knows pretty well what she wants and can obtain. The house is not palatial,—she would have no extravagance,—neither does she propose to go to extremes in fitting it up; but she has very decided views on the matter, views that appear to me quite just and true.

"Mother is far from well. Her health has gradually failed, and she is totally unfitted to supervise the work of the decorators, or to attend to the selection of furnishings. I am completely tied up in my business. We need the help of some competent person who will enter into mother's plans, suggest improvement, where improvement can be made, and act in mother's stead in seeing those plans carried out. Yesterday mother read your article in this month's *Homemaker*, and was greatly impressed by it. She asked me to hunt you up, thinking that if you couldn't yourself help us out, you might know some one who could and would. I got your address at the magazine office, and—well, here I am." His eyes left the walls and roofs and chimneys, and once more rested on her face; this time with less embarrassment.

"And may I ask where your new home is to be, and how your helper is to keep in touch with the source of authority?" inquired Miss Fleming, the violet eyes full of sympathetic interest, and the crimson-tipped lips curving upward with an encouraging smile. She was outwardly calm, but inwardly she was quivering with wonder at what promised to be a stroke of incredible good-fortune. Such an opportunity!

"O, I should have told you," said the young man, "that we have built at Wavecrest in the highlands of the Jersey shore. For the last two summers we have lived there in a rented cottage, and mother is delighted with the place. It is near enough to the city so that I can easily get to business, and it has the unusual advantage of combining real country life with the privileges of a popular seaside resort. What we would like best would be to have our adviser and assistant come there and live with us for a time. It would both please and benefit mother to have a congenial companion, and we are willing to make any financial arrangement necessary to secure such a person."

When the sun went down at the close of that hot June day, it left Miss Alicia Flemming busy over her trunks,

and in an exultantly joyful frame of mind. The cloud of the afternoon had passed away. The financial arrangement suggested by Mr. Hawthorne was such as far exceeded any "financial arrangement" she had ever made during her years of self-dependence. It seemed to her munificent. Then, too, she was to spend several weeks, at least, by the seashore, instead of the paltry few days she had hoped to afford. More important still, if not more pleasant, she would have a fine opportunity to make practical studies and experiments in decoration and furnishing, and thus get fresh and original matter for her magazine. The only possible drawback was in her relations with old Mrs. Hawthorne. If the old lady proved to be a peevish, notional and domineering person, inclined to exact the homage due to a superior, life might not be all roses. But, she must take her chances. For such an opportunity Miss Flemming felt she would be willing to bear a good deal.

She sent her trunks to the boat the next morning, and spent some hours in finishing her Homemaker article, in notifying her clients and correspondents of her new address, and in packing away her studio fittings. At three o'clock Mr. Hawthorne called for her with a carriage, and at a quarter to four they were on the Wavecrest boat speeding down the harbor.

She found Mr. Hawthorne a very agreeable escort. Discovering that her knowledge of the harbor and bay was but slight, he pointed out the places and objects of note, commenting on them in an interesting way, and without a particle of affectation. Indeed he seemed most anxious to please her, and was succeeding admirably when an interruption occurred. It came in the person of another young man, of rather distinguished appearance, dressed strictly in the mode, who, having passed them once in his tramp up the deck, came face to face with them as he returned. Seeing Miss Flemming, he stopped, looked questioningly at her for a second or two, and then came forward with outstretched hand and beaming face.

"*Alicia!* Is it *really* you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Walter, it is really I," she quietly replied, giving him her hand. Then she introduced the two young men. The newcomer seated himself with them.

"Mr. Elverson is a person not unknown to fame," Miss Flemming explained to Hawthorne. "He has made quite a stir in the art world in the last two or three years. We heard most flattering things of him while he was yet in Paris, and now New York honors him,—and is honored

by him. I once had the privilege of being his small-girl neighbor and schoolmate. You see his success hasn't made him too proud to acknowledge his humble past acquaintances."

"Don't talk nonsense, Alicia!—or should I say Miss Flemming?" laughingly retorted the artist.

"Alicia, by all means, if you will. It is so long since I met anyone who knew me in the old way, that Alicia and Miss Flemming seem distinct persons. Alicia died young, and so long ago that Miss Flemming can scarcely remember what she looked like."

"Then Miss Flemming should look in a mirror," said Elverson. "Five years have made as little change in you as could possibly be. I'd have known you anywhere. As for Alicia being dead, if she is dead you killed her; sacrificing her young life to your determination to be independent, and burying her in some out-of-the-way corner of the great city. Why was it necessary to hide like that? And, if you knew I had returned, why couldn't you let me know where you were?"

Alicia made no reply, but sat, sadly thoughtful, her gaze directed far out over the waters.

"We owe Mr. Hawthorne an explanation," she said, after a time. "Five years ago, just after Mr. Elverson had gone to Paris, and while I was away at school, my father, mother and little brother were instantly killed at a railroad crossing while out driving. I found myself left an orphan, with but little provision, and I went to the city to learn something that would enable me to earn my living. I have managed to do so without being a burden to my friends,—for which I am as thankful as they ought to be."

"But," protested Elverson, "there might have been,"—

"Yes," she interrupted, "there might have been many things. We know, at least, what has been and is."

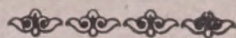
"Perhaps what has been is for the best," suggested Mr. Hawthorne. "But here we are at the pier. Miss Flemming will be our guest at Wavercrest for a few weeks, Mr. Elverson, and my mother and I will be pleased to have you call."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Hawthorne," replied Elverson. And then, as Hawthorne moved ahead a little, Elverson put out his hand to Miss Flemming, and said:

"And you, Alicia?" Will you, too, be glad to have me call?"

"Surely," she answered; though she did not meet his eyes. "Why not?"

"Thank you," he murmured. And she followed Mr. Hawthorne.



CHAPTER II.

If Alicia had felt any misgivings as to her relations with Mrs. Hawthorne, such misgivings were put to flight in the first five minutes of their intercourse. The sweet, placid old face, with its setting of snow-white hair, was lighted by a pair of eyes brimful and running over with sympathy and love. The sad memories awakened by her meeting with Elverson still left their traces on Alicia's face when she met Mrs. Hawthorne, and, with the keenness of one whose heart is sensitive to the sorrow of others, the old lady noticed the shadow, and put a world of comfort in her welcoming kiss and caress.

"It is *so* good of you, my dear, to come to the aid of a poor, foolish old woman, who ought, perhaps, to be thinking more of her heavenly than her earthly mansion. But, as George probably told you, it is the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream, and I hope the folly of it may not be charged too heavily against me. The new house is the embodiment of a romantic fancy of my girlhood. I fancied that I should marry a rich man,—which I didn't, though riches came afterward. I fancied that my husband would take me to an elegantly appointed home. We would have every luxury, and I would be the envy of all my girl friends. But these things were not to be. Now, even at this late day, I am to see part of this dream realized, and I call the new home "The House of the Honeymoon."

"It is a very pretty fancy," said Alicia, smiling at Mrs. Hawthorne's rather apologetic explanation.

They all retired early that evening, and Hawthorne took little part in the brief after-dinner talk. The next morning he and Alicia breakfasted at seven, and before he left for the city he took Alicia up to see the new house.

Wavecrest is situated on Sandy Hook bay, at the northern end of the highlands from which the Twin Lights long sent their rays out over the night-shadowed waters for the guidance of those who go down to the sea in ships. The village climbs by beautiful terraces up the side of a

hill, on the summit of which is a circle of fine residences. Beyond this, by another sharp ascent, one reaches the level where the forest still grows unchecked, except as winding paths and roadways give access to its cool, shaded depths.

The new house occupied a commanding site on the village edge of this high bluff, with a magnificent outlook upon the bay and sea. It was a fine, modern building, with ample grounds around it, grounds recently rescued from wildness, and now beginning to show the first green growth of the sward that was to be. Entering it, they went from room to room, Hawthorne explaining how this or the other arrangement was his mother's own idea, and giving Alicia many hints concerning what it was hoped they could do in the way of fitting up the home.

Then he had to hurry for his boat. It did not occur to Alicia that Hawthorne had not mentioned Elverson. Why should he? But, then, why shouldn't he?

When Alicia got back to the cottage, she found Mrs. Hawthorne up and eating her tea and toast. After this was finished they went out on the shady side of the broad veranda, and as soon as they were comfortably seated, Mrs. Hawthorne said:

"Now, my dear, tell me all about yourself. You know how curious old women are sure to be. I shall be much easier to get along with if you humor my foibles."

So Alicia told her story; told it very simply, making as light as possible of her sorrows and struggles, and painting only her successes in strong tints. But the kind old heart was not deceived. She understood, though she sat silent for a long time after the story ended, and finally made no comment except to say: "Ycu poor, dear child!" as she laid her hand gently upon Alicia's.

When next she spoke it was on another topic.

"Now about this work of decoration," she began. "I think George told you that I had been interested in such subjects for many years. I built a great many Spanish castles, and planned carefully all the details of their interior adornment. In order to fit myself for this dream-work I read much and thought more. I wonder if I will ever get as much satisfaction from owning a real house, fitted as I wish it to be, as I have had in planning for the 'airy nothings' of my imagination?"

"Why shouldn't you?" Alicia asked, though she knew the question to be an empty one.

"Well," said the old lady, "I am too near the end of

my time and strength, for one thing. It matters less now what sort of make-shift shelters me. Forty years ago, when I was passably well-looking and socially ambitious, it would have meant much to me if I could have dressed myself with a becoming house."

Alicia laughed at the quaint suggestion.

"Dressed yourself with a house!" she exclaimed. "What an odd notion!"

"Does it strike you so?" queried Mrs. Hawthorne, looking at Alicia with a quizzical assumption of surprise.

"Is it possible that a writer for the *Homemaker* has never realized that a woman's home is merely a larger dress which, if well arranged, serves to bring out her good points; or, if badly arranged, serves to kill every personal advantage nature and the dressmaker have given her?"

"I'm sure I never before thought of it in that way," admitted Alicia, meditatively.

"Why, my dear," pursued the kind old voice, "the first beginning of home-making is to recognize that the home is simply an extension of the personality and person of the woman who is its centre. The charm of a home is the woman. Whatever can increase that charm, whether it is fine wearing apparel, or harmonious house decorations, the woman ought to seek and her men-folks ought to supply. Her clothes must be made to suit her form and complexion. Her rooms should agree with her person and her clothes. I have seen a well-dressed and handsome woman made to look ugly and dowdy by being in a room where the walls and furnishings threw her into unpleasant contrast. It sets my store teeth on edge now as I think how I was once received by a handsome brunette dressed in a red evening gown, in a drawing-room where the walls were blue, the draperies pink, and the furniture a nightmare of dark blue and gilt! The effect on her complexion was to make her fairly purple in the face!"

Alicia joined in the hearty laugh this picture shook from her companion.

"Surely," she said, "that is a new point of view."

"O, no it isn't," replied Mrs. Hawthorne. "No doubt many another has thought of it."

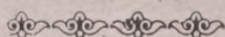
"But I have never seen it written up," persisted Alicia, the instinct of the scribe aroused in her.

"The scribblers haven't exhausted this subject yet, my dear, and they won't exhaust it very soon," replied the old lady. Then, as the carriage drove under the porte cochere, she said:

"But, come now, slip on your hat while Mary bundles

me up. We will take a look at Wavecrest, and we can talk shop again after I have had my afternoon nap."

They were soon in the carriage, whirling at an inspiring pace along the fine road which ran through the woodland skirting the bluff. Though Alicia ventured once or twice to approach what was to her the all-absorbing topic, she found Mrs. Hawthorne inflexible in her determination to confine the conversation to other things. And, what with hill and valley, woodland and meadow, and the frequent glimpses of far-stretching sea and sky, there was enough in Nature to put Art for the time in the background.



CHAPTER III.

After lunch, while Mrs. Hawthorne was having her "forty winks" as she termed it, though there must have been long intervals between winks, Alicia strolled down to the shore and watched the crowd of bathers who were disporting themselves after the usual manner. When she returned she found her patron in the veranda chair listening with keen enjoyment while Mary read to her "The Gentleman from Indiana." The reading stopped as Alicia approached.

"You may go now, Mary, thank you," said the old lady. Then she continued, addressing Alicia as Mary went:

"That's a decent sort of story. I confess that I know how it's going to turn out, but that's part of the satisfaction. I never read a story until I look up its finish. If it ends with tragedy, as seems to be the rule in modern stories, I don't bother with it. I read novels for entertainment and recreation. The daily paper furnishes tragedies enough. If a writer can't tell us a pleasant story, then, for goodness sake let him or her write about something else."

"Decorations, perhaps," suggested Alicia, laughing at her friend's earnestness of protest.

"Yes; that is, if they know anything worth writing on the subject," was the shrewd reply.

Mrs. Hawthorne waited until Alicia was comfortably seated, and then returned to the subject of the morning's talk.

"Well, my dear, what will be your first step towards the decoration of our house?" she asked.

"The determination of a color scheme, and the selection of the paper, I suppose," replied Alicia.

"That's just the point I wished to bring up, right now." And Mrs. Hawthorne smiled her quizzical smile. "It is my wish that not a scrap of paper goes on the walls of our house."

Alicia looked rather surprised and dismayed. Was Mrs. Hawthorne joking?

"But what will you use if you don't use paper?" she inquired, in a rather bewildered way.

The old lady laughed at Alicia's evident discomfiture.

"And you are a writer on decorations!" she exclaimed.

"But, forgive my rudeness," she went on. "I laid a trap for you, and you fell into it, that's all. Did you ever hear of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na?"

"Do you mean the woven wall fabrics that are something of a fad at present?" asked Alicia.

"Fad!" exclaimed Mrs. Hawthorne. "Why, my dear, you never made a greater mistake. Fab-Ri-Ko-Na is not a fad, but a revolution. It is as much of an advance over all other wall coverings as the modern battle-ship is over the wooden frigates in which my grandfather fought the British! Believe me, child, it is no fad; it is an invaluable discovery or invention, or whatever you may choose to call it. Have you noticed the walls of this cottage?"

"Do you mean have I noticed the paper?"

"I mean both the paper and the cracks. The paper is of good quality, and was put on only this last Spring, but every room in the blessed house is marred by unsightly cracks. A woven wall covering would have prevented such blemishes. The wall simply can't crack when a strong fabric holds it.

"Then think of the designs. They are handsome enough, and attractive when one first sees them, but my eyes get tired and my nerves unstrung looking at zig-zig lines that carry the sight through a meaningless maze, or at curves and circles that lead to nothing and end nowhere, merely repeating themselves every eighteen inches all around the room. I greatly prefer a wall of solid color, with the ornament in the frieze where one don't have to look at it all the time, or in an artistic panel, which is as much separated from the general wall as any other picture."

She paused for a moment looking far away over the water. Indeed she had seemed for the moment to be thinking aloud rather than addressing Alicia.

"Speaking of pictures," she went on, "there is nothing put on a wall that makes such a lovely background for pictures and statuary as Fab-Ri-Ko-Na. I wonder if they use it in studios and art-galleries yet?"

"Here comes someone who may be able to tell us," said Alicia. And as she spoke Elverson mounted the steps of the veranda. She introduced him to Mrs. Hawthorne, and playfully explained the subject of their conversation. Elverson did not seem especially interested, but the old lady was too intent on her point to let him escape.

"We were just wondering," she said, "whether you artists had yet discovered the value of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na as a background for pictures and statuary."

"I am fortunate in being able to answer in the affirmative for one studio—my own—and for our recent exhibition. The hall was draped with Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, and the effect was greatly admired. Some of the sales-galleries are also adopting it. Assuredly it is bound to make its way as a background for works of art."

Elverson was making a good impression on the old lady, even if his eyes were mostly directed toward the younger one.

"Do you know, sir, how these wall coverings are regarded by architects?" Mrs. Hawthorne asked.

"It happens that my most intimate friend is an architect, and connected with a prominent firm," Elverson replied. "He tells me that the leading men in his line regard Fab-Ri-Ko-Na with great favor. They are specifying it for good houses, not only for the reason that it keeps the walls intact, but also because of the rich, dignified and thoroughly artistic effects it secures. Wall paper has, at the best, a rather hard surface, reflecting back the light, while Fab-Ri-Ko-Na has depth into which the light seems to sink, giving a peculiarly soothing effect to the eye. For these reasons, and because it is proof against germs and vermin, Fab-Ri-Ko-Na is being specified for office and school buildings, and for all sorts of places of general assembly."

"How does the cost of it compare with that of wall paper?" Alicia inquired.

"O, as to that," said Elverson, "it costs no more than the best grades of wall paper, and, when you consider that it preserves the walls, that it cannot easily be marred by contact with furniture, or by the many bumps and scratches that walls are heir to, and that it can be restrained at small cost if it grows dim from age or dust, it is really an economy."

"Doesn't it fade?" asked Alicia.

"Fade!" ejaculated the old lady. "Everything fades if you give it time enough. Look at me, for example!" Her laugh took all suggestion of bitterness from the words.

"It's true," assented Elverson, "that all things fade, but some fade sooner than others. The Fab-Ri-Ko-Na dyes are the most permanent made. The goods, as I happen to know, are all sun-tested before leaving the mills."

"Well, children," said Mrs. Hawthorne, rising as she spoke, "I must ask you to excuse me now until dinner. I hope it will be convenient for you to dine with us this evening, Mr. Elverson."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Hawthorne, and I really regret that an engagement to go sailing to-night deprives me of the pleasure of accepting your invitation." Elverson's regret was evidently sincere.

"Well, any night that you can spare us will do. We are quiet folks here, and my son is seldom away from me. Come in when you can."

When they were left alone, Elverson suggested to Alicia that they go down to the beach, and she assented. A little beyond the new pier they found a cosy place on some rocks that were just out of the reach of the spray, and seated themselves. They had spoken but a few words during their walk, and now sat for a time in a sort of embarrassed silence. Finally Elverson, looking wistfully into Alicia's face, broke the silence.

"Does this remind you of anything Alicia?"

"Yes, very strongly."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"Gladly,—that is if I can get it clearly in mind. Let me see,—it reminds me of,—O yes! of how

'The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low;
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.'"

"O, come!" don't be perverse," said Elverson. "May I tell you of what this reminds me?"

"You may, if you think best, but I'm quite sure it won't be as interesting or to the point as the story of 'The Walrus and the Carpenter!'" Alicia spoke teasingly, but the color deepened in her cheeks.

"The Walrus and the Carpenter be—blowed! Let me

tell you about it. This water spreading out before us reminds me of a beautiful lake—”

“ ‘Whose rippling waters shall syllable but thy name, Pauline!’ ” murmured Alicia. “Go on, Melnotte. I will be the Lady of Lyons.”

“Please don’t interrupt me with such nonsense,” said Elverson, almost pleadingly. “I’m not in a mood for such things. I am thinking of a summer day when a boy and a girl sat on a rock beside a lake, under the shade of a great willow whose roots could scarcely find soil enough for nourishment. I remember how they talked of the future, and of their dreams as to what it would bring. I remember how he declared that some day he would be an artist, going to the old world to sit at the feet of great masters, and coming back to his native land after many years laden with prizes, to claim what would ever be to him the greatest prize of all. I remember how she turned her little face to him with a look of tender encouragement, and how he put his arms around her—”

“What a naughty boy!”

“And kissed her, and she kissed him—”

“The bold little minx!”

“And told him she believed in him, and loved him, and would be his faithful little friend until he claimed his prize.”

“Wasn’t that charming childishness!”

“The years have passed, and he has returned to his native land, a boy no longer, but a man.”

“And she, I suppose, is probably a woman?”

“A beautiful woman.”

“Oh!”

“The years were long—”

“In which he forgot to write to her?”

“He didn’t forget.”

“Then he wilfully neglected her?”

“He had many struggles—”

“And she, of course, had smooth sailing? Didn’t have to earn her own living, or fight for a foothold in her chosen field?”

“Now, Alicia!”

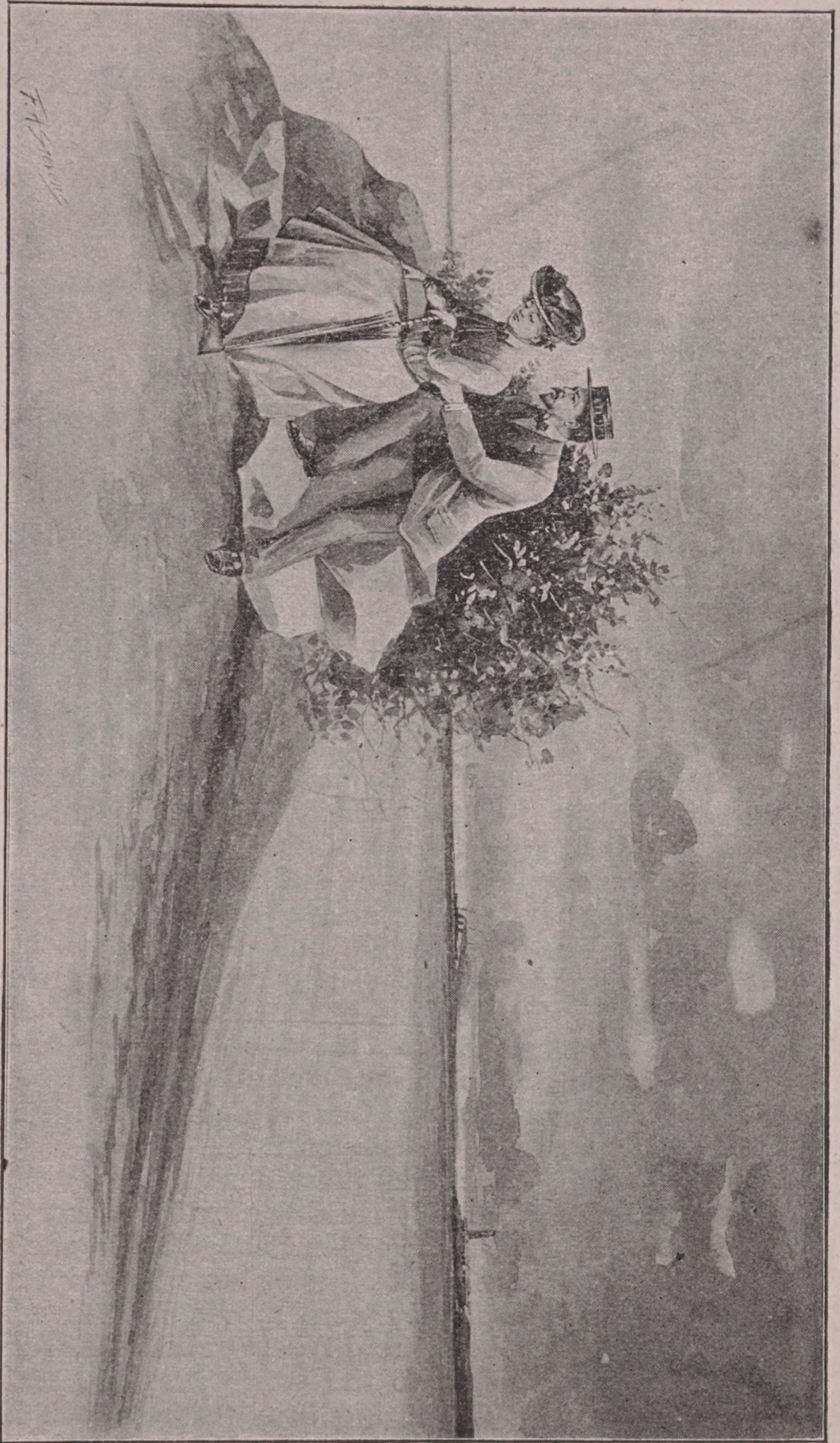
“Now, Walter!”

“He has won his many prizes—”

“And the wilfully neglected ‘greatest prize?’ ”

“He hopes to win.”

“Did he ever hear what happened to Brady’s calf when Brady neglected to shelter it through a cold winter’s night?”



“HE HOPES TO WIN.”—Page 18.

"I think not."

"It froze to death."

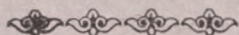
"Alicia, I am sorry—"

"So was Brady, but it made no difference to the calf. There comes the boat, and Mr. Hawthorne will be on it. I must hurry back to the house. He will expect his paid assistant to be on hand and earning her salary. Will you go with me?"

"Yes,—but, Alicia, let me say—"

"Say what you will, Walter," interrupted Alicia, looking him squarely in the eyes with an expression not to be misinterpreted; "only remember that the calf died, *and stayed dead.*"

So he said nothing, and they parted at the terrace with a brief "good night."



CHAPTER IV.

The moon rose in glorious fullness that evening, and the great restless waters seemed soothed until their heaving was like the breathing of a sleeping child. Mrs. Hawthorne was not feeling well, and retired to her room directly after dinner. Her son saw to her comfort with his usual solicitous tenderness, and then came out to where Alicia sat, her thoughts busy with the experience of the afternoon. "Miss Flemming," said Hawthorne, "I have a sail-boat lying idle at the anchorage. I seldom get time to go out. Would you enjoy a little sail in the moonlight? I think you may trust my ability as a sailor. It is one of my few accomplishments."

Alicia got some wraps, and they went down to where the little sloop lay gracefully rocking to and fro, accepting the gentle but firm restraint of her anchor as serenely as a happy wife accepts the restraints of her wifely duty.

On the way, and after they were moving out over the moon-lit water, Hawthorne told Alicia of his plans for the morrow. She was to go to the city with him, and he was to take her to a decorating firm through whom he would have the proposed work done. He would leave her there to go over with them the question of materials and designs. He would call for her about noon, and after

lunch they would return to Wavecrest on an early boat to report to his mother the results of her interview. All this he told, with details not essential to this record.

Shifting from business, he described to her the rigging of the boat, explained the names and functions of the sails, had her take hold of the wheel with him that he might show her how to steer, gave her illustrations of the art of tacking, and in a straightforward, manly way made himself very interesting and agreeable.

Alicia talked little, merely enough to show her intelligent appreciation of his kind efforts. Was she watching him, and contrasting his strong steady manner with the impetuous, changeful, self-conscious manner of somebody else? And to a heart weary with a lonely struggle for subsistence and success, did the firm, confident poise of this business-like man have an attraction difficult to resist?

It was certainly a beautiful night. The day had been very warm, but nearly cloudless, and now the moon reigned the unchallenged queen in an almost opalescent heavens. When Hawthorne and Alicia sailed out from the anchorage there was barely wind enough to give them motion, but, in half an hour it had shifted to the northwest, and was steadily growing in strength.

It was interesting to Alicia to see how the spirits of Hawthorne seemed to rise with the rising of the wind. As the sails of the graceful *Anita* strained and swelled, and her sharp prow cut through the white-capped waves with ever-swiftening speed, Hawthorne seemed to become quite another man. He who had seldom more than smiled, even under the strongest provocation, now laughed outright, a hearty, ringing laugh, at Alicia's feeblest attempts to joke, or at his own occasional sallies of wit. Sitting close beside her, his eye never losing sight of the minutest detail of his sailor duty, controlling with faultless precision every movement of the flying craft, he appeared to her the very embodiment of one of the ancient heroes of salt water romance. She could imagine him to be a remote descendent of some savage old Viking; and she could fancy them both back in that far-off time, he having snatched her from her stern father's halls, repeating the story of which the poet dreamed in the verse that flashed through her thoughts, filling her with a feeling akin to awe:

“As with his wings aslant,
Sails the fierce Cormorant,
Seeking some rocky haunt,
With his prey laden,—

So toward the open main,
Beating to sea again,
Through the wild hurricane
Bore I the maiden."

And, with the fancy strong upon her, she could imagine that any maiden would be willing to have a Viking like him bear her away, it made little difference to what rocky haunt.

As the wind continued to rise, and the wind-clouds gathered in the sky, Hawthorne, instead of running out beyond the Hook, as had been his intention, beat across toward Staten Island, and then brought *Anita* about on the reach for home.

They were still more than a mile from the anchorage, scudding along without a reef, despite the now half gale, when both were startled by a cry of "Help!" which came to them faintly through the hissing of the wind. The moon was for the moment under a cloud, and they could not tell from what direction the appeal came. In a few seconds the cloud had passed, and Hawthorne standing up and scanning the tumbling waves with a quick glance, saw a dark object lifted into view about a quarter of a mile to the east. A swift turn of the wheel and a shift of the sail threw the *Anita* about, and the light racer flew to the rescue as though she knew her mission, or was inspired by the urgent spirit of her master.

Fast as *Anita* flew, the moments were heart-breakingly long to Alicia, with those constantly repeated cries ringing in her ears. Hawthorne shouted words of encouragement. When they finally drew near enough, Hawthorne and she discovered that the dark object was the upturned keel of a boat, and that the cries came from four men who were clinging to the plunging wreck, their hold threatened every moment by the huge waves that broke over them.

Hawthorne brought the *Anita* under the lee of the wreck and dropped the mainsail, entrusting the wheel to Alicia with a hurried instruction as to how to hold the sloop close to the wind. Flinging a noosed rope across the wreck he quickly drew one of the men to safety. Then another, and yet another, followed. When the rope was thrown to the remaining figure, he made no effort to seize it, and it was evident that he was benumbed almost to the point of unconsciousness, and was simply clinging with a dumb despair to his precarious hold. It took Hawthorne but an instant to decide. Flinging off his outer garments, and almost tearing the shoes from his

feet, he put the rope about him, bade the half-dazed rescued men to hold it, and, unheeding the cry Alicia could not repress, sprang into the raging water, and begin the battle for another's life as well as his own.

Of the ensuing moments Alicia has but a dim remembrance. She did not fail in her duty, standing firmly to the wheel, and holding the struggling *Anita* as steady as she could; but her eyes were shadowed by a mist, and her brain whirled in an unspeakable darkness, until she heard the men cry "He has got him!" and saw them drawing in the rope. A moment later, when the men after a hard struggle drew the two dripping figures over the side, she felt a sudden faintness, and leaning down upon the wheel, burst into hysterical sobs.

Leaving the unconscious man to the care of his companions, Hawthorne struggled with the sail until it was again sheeted home, then relieved Alicia, and gave the *Anita* her head. Alicia staggered forward to see if she could assist the rescued, and was horrified to discover that the dripping, unconscious form, was that of the man who had sat beside her on the rock that afternoon.

It was, indeed, Elverson!

When they ran in under the shelter of the pier, they found that the cries for help had been heard even that far, and that the work of rescue had been watched by anxious crowds. A doctor was at hand, and began at once the effort to restore Elverson to consciousness. It was nearly an hour before he succeeded, and then Elverson was carried away to the Belvidere, where he was staying, while, having seen the *Anita* duly anchored, Hawthorne and Alicia,—who had refused to leave him,—made their way home. Both were silent until Alicia asked:

"How did they come to be wrecked?"

"They were land-lubber sailors, and took fool chances," answered Hawthorne grimly.

"You were a brave man," ventured Alicia, again, as they reached the terrace steps.

"You were a brave girl," was the laconic reply.

Mrs. Hawthorne was asleep, and happily unconscious of the two bedraggled figures that entered the house. When the story was told her in a humorous way the next morning, all the more serious features were omitted.

CHAPTER V.

Before going to the boat on their way to New York the next morning, Hawthorne and Alicia called at the Belvidere to learn how Elverson had passed the night. He insisted on having them come to his room, and they found him propped up in bed greatly prostrated by the shock of his perilous adventure. His nerves were very much unstrung, and at the sight of his visitors he wept like a child. His attempts to thank them for his rescue were pitifully hysterical and incoherent.

Alicia felt truly sorry for him, and her tears could not be restrained; but was it a touch of inexplicable perversity that forced upon her, even at that moment, a sense of the contrast between the tear-stained, twitching face of Elverson, and the strong, tender face of the man who bent over the sufferer with reassuring words? She felt astonished and ashamed as she became conscious of the direction her thoughts were taking. Still she could not shake off their influence. When Elverson seized the hand she gave him in parting, and bent over it with passionate tears and kisses, she tore it from his grasp and almost fled from the room.

During the boat-trip to the city Alicia remained in the cabin, dreading to look upon the scene of last night's struggle, though the wind had blown itself out, and the sun was shining on the gradually subsiding waters. Hawthorne stayed with her, and diverted her thoughts by recounting the program for the day. When they reached the city he accompanied her to the decorating establishment of the Messrs. White, Wall & Co., where, having made an appointment, they found Mr. Wall in waiting. He was a man of middle age, with an alert eye, and a quick, snappy manner that gave promise of wide-awake business judgments and methods.

"Burlap?" he said in his high-pitched, aggressive tone. "To be sure we use burlap. We have used it for years. Nothing like it. They give it a bad name in some shops. But, why? I'll tell you. See that ring?" holding out his hand. "My wife gave me that on my birthday. Saw it in a window, went in and looked at it, liked it, was assured it was 'genuine,' bought it, paying goodness knows how much, enough anyhow to get the real article. I don't dare let her see the inside of it, and don't dare leave it off. Looked all right at first,—but now!" and he smiled a sarcastic smile, and waved his hands with an expressive motion.

"That's the case with burlap. Some of it is a regular gold-brick proposition. Looks as good as the best, but,—"
and again the expressive hands were waved.

"The fact is," he continued, "with burlap, as with everything else, there's only one best, and it don't pay to bother with anything else. The cost is about the same, but the value is mighty different. If you undertake to use burlap, use Fab-Ri-Ko-Na. Let me show it to you." And he started toward the salesroom.

"If you will excuse me," said Hawthorne, "I will leave you and Miss Flemming to settle the matter of materials, while I look after my business affairs. I will try to be here again by noon, and you can have the whole house fitted out by that time, I suppose."

When Hawthorne was gone, Mr. Wall had several rolls of the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na goods brought to his office, and opened for Alicia's inspection.

"You see," remarked the decorator, as he spread the different textures before her, "that Fab-Ri-Ko-Na means more than burlap. These," pointing to certain rolls, "are specimens of the burlap wall coverings, and they're beauties, too. Notice what a perfect finish these people get. The best of it is that the finish remains. Don't leave for parts unknown as soon as the goods are on the wall. See that color," indicating a handsome green; "why, I know rooms that I put just such a green on five years ago, and I'll give my word they're just as bright to-day as when I did them."

Alicia examined the goods carefully. She greatly admired the rich tones of the burlaps, and their decorative possibilities appealed to her very strongly.

"What sort of backing is this," she asked, turning the wrong side toward them.

"Huh!" said Mr. Wall, and laughed a staccato sort of laugh. "If I knew the secret of that I could quit the decorating business. Lots of people would like to know it. Some have thought they *did* know it, but Think-so is generally a fool. Their Think-so cost themselves and the decorating trade a heap of money and trouble."

"But what is there special about this backing?"

"You mean what makes it specially valuable?"

Alicia nodded.

"Several things. Fills the goods, for one thing. Gives firm body to the fabric. All the space between the threads is filled. Then it is made expressly to facilitate pasting. It takes ordinary flour paste easily, but don't let it soak through to the surface, and when the goods

are put on the walls sticks them there until they really become a part of the wall itself. A piece of goods backed by that backing is like an enterprise backed by millions—it means business. Has get-there and stay-there to it.

“Now that,” said Mr. Wall, spreading out his fingers ready to count on them; “that gives us how many things in favor of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na backing? Gives body to the goods—one; pastes easily with flour paste—two; stays stuck when you stick it—that’s three. But that’s not all. With this backing the edges of the goods can be trimmed to a true line after the paste is on, and they won’t swell when wet nor shrink when dry. That, you see would make the butted joints open, which mars the whole job. Then, the fact that the mesh of the fabric is thoroughly filled prevents the wall showing through as it does when a flimsier goods is used, and leaves no places where dust can lodge or vermin hide. See?”

“But,” ventured Alicia, “how about germs? What you say about dust and vermin made me think of disease germs.”

“The germ that lands on Fab-Ri-Ko-Na meets his fate,” Mr. Wall replied, emphatically, bringing his hands together with a significant slap. “The genius who prepared the matter for this sample-book writes that the goods are ‘thoroughly impregnated with an odorless, non-poisonous antiseptic preparation’ which is fatal to germs. The medical people are satisfied on that score.”

“How wide are these goods made?” Alicia asked.

“Yard, yard and a half, two and three yards. The very wide goods are coming into demand for certain work because they can be run around the room in one solid piece, with a single joint in a corner where it can’t be noticed or picked at. Of course the joints don’t show much when the goods are hung in strips, but the wide goods are a great thing, and make a beautiful wall. With a dado at the bottom, or a frieze at the top, or some form of what we call a two-thirds treatment, they are, in fact, the best thing that ever happened in the wall cover line.”

“What sort of dados or friezes do you use in connection with these goods?” was Alicia’s next query.

“There are two sorts we can use. The manufacturers produce print goods of highly artistic designs, and we often use them. They make a fine finish. The only drawback is that there must be a limit to the designs and the color combinations. We get a wider range in another way. The Fab-Ri-Ko-Na people are the makers of the

Ko-Na-Colors you have seen advertised. These are water-colors made from the same dyes used in coloring the fabrics. The colors are mixed in a compound invented expressly for them, and are out of sight ahead of any other colors for use on fabric surfaces. With these colors, and the new form of double stencils now being made, we can produce dadoes, panels or friezes of any possible design, and in any possible combination of colors. A great advantage in this is that we can secure perfect unity to the color scheme of a room or suite of rooms, carrying out in the frieze, the dado or the panel, the design motive and the color effects in carpets, rugs, furniture or draperies. Any design which is not approximated in the ready-made stencils, we can make or have made, and any blend of colors, no matter how intricate or delicate, can be reproduced with the Ko-Na-Colors. Great scheme, isn't it?"

"It certainly is," admitted Alicia.

"You ought to see just what can be done to a room with these wall coverings and colors. A music room, for instance, can be stenciled with these colors in panels that contain the busts of great composers, or classic emblems relating to the art. A library may have on walls and ceiling the portraits of authors, or other appropriate designs. A den can be decorated with birds, beasts or fishes, with guns, nets or any old thing referring to the sports of the human male animal. If one cares to, he can make a room the centre of a woodland, or a flower garden, by stenciling the trees and shrubs artistically on the walls. Or, think what a charming ingle nook one could fashion. The scope is as broad as the imagination chooses to make it."

"Well," said Alicia, after a thoughtful moment, "I didn't dream of the possibilities in these goods. I thought them simply a passing fad. But, I suppose we ought, as soon as possible, to decide on a color scheme for the house. Have you and Mrs. Hawthorne consulted as to that?"

Mr. Wall threw himself back in his chair, twinkled at Alicia through half-closed eyes, and bubbled for a moment with a repressed merriment which finally broke bounds and became a high, sharp laugh.

"Excuse me," he said, when he recovered himself. "Fine old lady, that. Sharp. Got ideas. Say," and he leaned forward toward Alicia in a confidential way, "do you know, she actually put me on to some wrinkles in my own business that I never got next to before. Really, she did. Asked me questions that stumped me. Sug-

gested things that made me feel like kicking myself to think I'd never had sense enough to find them out for myself. The fact is, I suppose, that some of us are too busy doing the few things we know, to get much time to learn new things. We think in ruts. Our methods get to be habits. As we grow older we get worse in that respect. Perfectly natural, but not progressive. Why, it took me five years to see the real merit and value of the very goods I've been showing you. Would you think me such an old fossil?"

Alicia laughed, and shook her head.

"But, about this color scheme business. The old lady and I talked the matter over pretty thoroughly, and I've made some rough drawings in perspective, which give a general idea of what we decided on."

Mr. Wall went to a cabinet and took down several rolls which he spread out on his desk.

"This," said he, pointing to one, "is for the downstairs rooms. It gives the hall, and glimpses of the drawing-room, the library and the dining-room

"Now," he continued, "we had to take into consideration the situation and surroundings of the house. It stands in the open. It has plenty of light. It is in the middle of a lawn, and not far from it are the trees which the woodman's axe has spared. During a large part of the year the house is surrounded with the deep green of the trees, and the vivid green of the grass, and flooded with strong sunlight. We have to imagine ourselves going into the house, with all this mass of light and color affecting our eyes,—and our feelings. We don't want too great a contrast all at once, nor colorings that are too striking. In the city houses, where the street colors are mostly neutral, or smoked or dusted to a depressing tone, the interiors should be more strikingly colored, to stimulate the depressed senses.

"In this case we go in from the vivid greens outdoors to the subdued green of this hallway. We retain the same color because the eye holds it, and cannot pass from it at a single step without a certain sense of shock or an unpleasant stimulus. You know the hall is a very special part of the house, for visitors get their first impressions here, and first impressions count. This light, neutral green, which is No. 130 in the sample book, makes just the right change from the outdoor effect to prepare us for the greater change we meet in the drawing-room, which, you see, we have made a terra-cotta, using this, No. 105.

"The color tone is now raised a little, and we are

prepared for the glimpse we get of the library, with its deep red walls. The dining-room, you will notice is in a golden brown.

"There are reasons for the choice of these colors. First of all, they harmonize. Standing here in the hall, and catching a view of the rooms as a group, we find that the four colors blend perfectly, satisfying one's sense of fitness. The reason for the green hall we have already discussed. The terra-cotta of the dining-room was selected not merely for its fitness as a neighbor color to the green, and a happy intermediate between the green and the red, but also because of its value as a decorative color for that particular room. It is an unobtrusive color, but conveys a sense of cheerfulness. It goes well with almost any of the polished natural woods, except those that are too deeply tinged with yellow. It forms a delicate background for the styles of furniture and furnishings usually selected for the drawing-room, and it sets off most admirably the pictures and draperies. Carpets or rugs to harmonize with it are easily found. Last of all, but very important, it may be worked on with the decorative stencilings so as to produce really exquisite effects.

"The red in the library is this deep red, No. 143. As Mrs. Hawthorne has book-cases in mahogany which are very dear to her on account of early associations, and wishes to install them in the new house, we chose this red to set them off, and to give the room the cosy cheerfulness which a library should have. It will be the social room, much used in the evening when the family gathers by the long centre-table to read or to write or to chat, and this color lights up finely. Then it is second to none as a background for pictures or statuary, or the knick-knacks that gather in such a room. On an autumn or winter evening, when the hearth-fire is lighted, and the chairs are drawn around in a cosy circle, one could hardly imagine a more pleasant room than this, with its red walls, its darker book cases filled with books in varied bindings, its paintings and statuary and draperies—but gracious me! I'm running dangerously near to poetry. Better let you imagine it for yourself. In this house there will be one thing lacking, unless the young man takes steps to supply it."

"What is that?" asked Alicia innocently, too intent on business to see the point.

"Why, a young woman, of course," said Mr. Wall, "unless," he added, significantly, "unless you are likely

to be a permanent part of the establishment."

Alicia blushed in spite of her efforts not to.

"You needn't count on me," she said. "I'm only hired for the occasion. When the house is finished and furnished I will go back to my bachelor-maid quarters, and be forgotten."

"Bachelor-maid quarters!" exclaimed Mr. Wall, with almost a snort of contempt. "You were never designed for a bachelor-maid. Unless the young men of your acquaintance are wanting in eyes or brains or hearts, you will be some day asked to give up your quarters for a better half." At which far-fetched pun the amiable decorator laughed immoderately.

"Are you a prophet?" asked Alicia mischievously.

"Prophet! and in the decorating business! In these days, Miss Flemming there's little chance for a profit in our line of trade." And again Mr. Wall enjoyed his own wit immensely.

Then they went back to the color scheme question.

"This dining-room, now," said Mr. Wall, "is in a golden brown, No. 152 in the sample-book. It is a color that is neither too somber nor too gay. It goes well with dining-room furniture, and when a plate-rail is used for the display of fancy bits of crockery it makes a most artistic contrast. A dining room shouldn't be made too strikingly colored. It should be cheerful in a neutral way. The persons at the table form the central feature, and the work of eating should be modified by the play of wit and fancy."

"What do you propose to put on the ceilings of these rooms," inquired Alicia.

"The ceiling problem varies in different houses," replied Mr. Wall, "but in this house we solve it in what is generally the most satisfactory way. Here is a prepared canvas."—and he showed it to her from the sample book,—"which we will use in all the rooms. It is a neutral white, and makes a fine smooth surface which can be tinted with any desired color, and lends itself splendidly to decorative stenciling. It is usually the most effective and satisfactory ceiling cover."

"For kitchen or bath-room walls the goods may be gone over with an enamel paint, which makes them perfectly water-proof and washable, without altogether destroying the fabric appearance of the surface. This can also be done in the nursery if thought best, though I am personally of the opinion that the soft surface is better, and that it should be ornamented with the charming stencilings.

There are a lot of special designs for such a room, designs the children will delight in. I have a theory that children should be surrounded from babyhood by as much brightness and beauty as the parents can afford. I think it tends to refinement and culture. The nursery at my house is gorgeous to behold."

After spending a few more minutes in examining the goods already selected, Mr. Wall, glancing at his watch, said:

"Now, Miss Flemming, it happens that my men are just finishing a house within a few blocks of here, and we will have ample time to take a look at it and get back before Mr. Hawthorne calls for you. As we have used Fab-Ri-Ko-Na throughout the house, you can get a good idea as to what the effects are. It will be of more help to you than hours of description."

So Alicia accompanied the decorator, and was well repaid for so doing. When she saw actually before her the work she had tried to imagine, she realized what no description could possibly convey. When they returned to the store, she was an enthusiastic convert to the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na system of wall covering, and, as they ate their restaurant-lunch, greatly amused Mr. Hawthorne with the views she expressed on the subject. Her appreciation of Mr. Wall was equally hearty, and her gay imitations of the decorator's tone and manner were highly entertaining.

Gradually, however, Hawthorne endeavored to turn the conversation another way. He was naturally a reserved sort of fellow, but Alicia seemed to bring him out to a degree which surprised him, and which would have surprised her had she known him better. He had always been the reverse of a "ladies' man," and his mother was, indeed, the only woman with whom he had ever been on terms of comradeship. Until the death of his father his allowance of money had been so little above actual expenses that he had kept out of the social circles in which he might have overcome his diffidence. Since taking up the business, he had found little time for social relaxation, as his days were fully occupied with business cares, while his evenings were devoted to his mother, who, as her strength declined, leaned ever more heavily on him.

Then, Alicia was what seemed to him a peculiar type of woman, belonging to a class of which he had known almost nothing, but which had always a fascination for his imagination. She was a writer! She actually wrote things that were printed and paid for! A young woman

with whom he could talk without feeling overawed, and who talked to him as if she found no deficiencies in his conversation,—she a writer,—a person who could sit down with a pencil and bit of paper, and without hesitation express her knowledge or opinion on almost any subject!

Hawthorne had the same high appreciation of this ability to express things which is felt by the majority of people. The gift of expression has not become common property even yet, though of the making of books and papers there is no end, and hundreds scribble now who never did before, while those who long have written, now write more. He had approached Alicia's studio door with reluctance and dread; he had been relieved to find the "literary woman" a very simple, unaffected, easy-mannered, business-like person; and, as his acquaintance with her developed, he was constantly more pleased and charmed by companionship with this young lady of what seemed to him such rare gifts.

He was interested. He wished to know more about her. He determined to learn from her own lips whatever she felt free to disclose to him. So he managed to divert the conversation into a more personal channel. He made the first move by asking a very frank and direct question.

"Do you enjoy your work in life, Miss Flemming? Does it satisfy you?"

Alicia looked at him keenly for an instant. The fact is that their situation had for the moment made her recall the playful suggestions of the decorator about her future. Bachelor-maid! Surely it *was* nice to be independent, and free to follow one's own individual bent. But, sitting there at that little table, screened from obtrusive eyes, furnished with the good things of life without the need for economy, and having every possible wish anticipated by this quiet, unassuming but clear-eyed and clear-brained young man, Alicia had yielded to the influence of the situation, and had acknowledged to herself that comradeship of this kind might furnish satisfaction not to be found in the independent existence. With these thoughts in mind, the question Hawthorne asked seemed peculiarly pointed. But, when she looked into his frank eyes she saw nothing there but a sympathetic interest in her and her work.

"Yes," she answered, "I enjoy my work,—enjoy it very much. As for satisfaction, though, I'm not so sure. Did you ever see a perfectly satisfied person?"

"I think I failed to give you my meaning," said

Hawthorne, who, having noticed Alicia's slight hesitation before answering him, and not understanding it, was just a little puzzled to know what it meant. "I didn't intend to ask if you were at present satisfied with your lot, but if you felt satisfied with your profession,—satisfied that it offered you the opportunities you needed, and that it promised suitable rewards?"

That was the beginning of a conversation too long to fully record. We know how unexpectedly and even unaccountably we drift in conversation from one subject to another, either getting all the time nearer the surface of things if the companion is uninspiring or uncongenial, or getting down deeper and deeper into the very heart of things if the warmth of a mutual sympathy melts away the barriers of reserve, and induces timid confidence to come from her hiding-place.

What a memorable chat that was! At first Alicia playfully fenced with Hawthorne, trying to ward off his pointed inquiries without offending him. When she found that he was very seriously inclined, and very sympathetic, she gradually fell into his mood, and gave him glimpses of her life and its peculiar experiences.

So freely and fully did she disclose herself, that Hawthorne could see, as if in Memory's glass, the high-spirited little girl, petted by parents and friends; the eager school-miss, eager for books, for frolic and for friendship; the ambitious young woman, suddenly and terribly stripped of home and income, going bravely into the battle for bread, and, in an excess of sensitiveness, cutting clear from her former friends and companions, intending never to renew the old ties until she could do so without being thought to need their pity or their help. The bitter disappointments, the days of actual want, the lonely illnesses, the occasional insults, the gradual conquest of conditions, and the final partial victory,—all these were disclosed to him, broadly outlined, and lighted by many diverting descriptions or gay comments.

In response to this, he, too, drew out of the past the chief lines of his own story, revealing to her the "old-fashioned" boy, made more old-fashioned by his constant association with his mother, to the almost complete exclusion of child companions; the thoughtful, studious, repressed youth, feeling keenly his father's penuriousness, his mother's unsatisfied longings for more liberty and beauty in her life, and his own helplessness, except as he took advantage of his chance for education and prepared himself for an independent future; holidays spent in the

business, and used to good purpose, giving him preparation for the responsibilities which fell suddenly upon him and which he was now bearing with a reasonable degree of success; his diffidence and frequent loneliness, his dread of the not distant day when his mother would leave him; his rather bitter sense of the wrong of a fate that withheld money from him and his mother at the time when they might have enjoyed it, and thrust it upon them in abundance when it was no longer of special worth,—all this and more Hawthorne disclosed, being led on beyond all reserve by the unflagging interest and unfeigned sympathy of Alicia.

This conversation lasted them through lunch, through the carriage-ride to the boat, through the hour's sail to Wavecrest; and was at last so suddenly broken off that it would remain ready to be renewed at any time.

Strange to say, both participants, on reaching their respective dressing-rooms, went through much the same performance. Hawthorne entered his room slowly, shut the door with an absent air, stood in the middle of the room for some minutes, looking very intently at a grotesque face cut in coconut fibre which ornamented or deformed his cigar-holder, though it is certain he did not know at what he was staring. Then he went to the mirror, beheld his reflection in the glass, nodded his head at it, and addressed it thus:

“Well, old fellow, why not? you certainly would look more comfortable if she stood beside you, and your arm was around her waist, and her head was resting on your shoulder. Don't you think so? Of course you do. A fellow as sensible looking as you couldn't think differently. If we only knew how the land lay—whether that artist chap is liable to be an obstacle or not! But, we will wait and watch. If the decorating job holds out as they usually do, we are good for two months together, at any rate.”

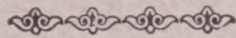
As for Alicia, she sat down, hat, gloves and all; sat down in the low rocker by the front window, where she could look out over the bay.

“Now, Alicia Flemming,” she began, addressing that young lady with some severity, “I would like to know what possessed you! You have just about turned yourself inside out to a man who was a total stranger to you less than a week ago! You must be growing feeble-minded. O, you needn't argue that he did the same, and that it was only a fair exchange of confidences. That's no argument at all. Take notice, too, young lady that

you carefully avoided reference to a certain painter chap, of his early devotion, or of his suddenly revived ardor. Don't you wonder whether there may not be an offsetting reservation on the other side, some young woman much handsomer, richer and more brilliant than you? And what will you do with Elverson?"

And so she sat, holding communion with herself, forgetful of all else, until she heard him go down the stairs to meet his mother who, as the grinding carriage-wheels gave notice, was just coming in from a ride, though the porte cochere was at the side of the house, and out of Alca's sight.

Then Miss Flemming hurriedly refreshed herself, exchanged her walking-dress for a flimsy something suitable for the warm afternoon, made an extra dab or two beyond her usual attention to her appearance, and hurried down to join mother and son on the veranda.



CHAPTER VI.

It was delightful to see the pleasure in the face of old Mrs. Hawthorne as she listened to Alicia's confession of her Fab-Ri-Ko-Na conversion. Which goes to show that she possessed, with the rest of us, the instinct for making converts which gives zest to the art of the orator, inspires the lawyer as he pleads before court and jury, kindles the fervor of the editor appealing to the reading public, and lifts the missionary above the loneliness and privations of his life as he goes to and fro among the benighted heathen. Perhaps there are few human achievements which fill one with so much satisfaction with himself, as to know that his opinion has beaten down indifference or opposition, and has won a genuine victory.

Next to Alicia's conversion, Mrs. Hawthorne enjoyed Alicia's comments on the characteristics of Mr. Wall.

"Bless the man!" said the old lady. "what a bundle of nerves he is. And yet, except for his suddenness of speech and action, he is steady enough. And he knows something, too. It's refreshing, when there's so much stupidity to contend with, to find a man who has a real, well-balanced brain. There's plenty of ability in the

world, but little balance. Most folks are so heavy on one side and so light on the other, that they are forever teetering around, and couldn't keep to a straight line if their lives depended on it."

"He says he is indebted to you for some valuable suggestions," remarked Alicia.

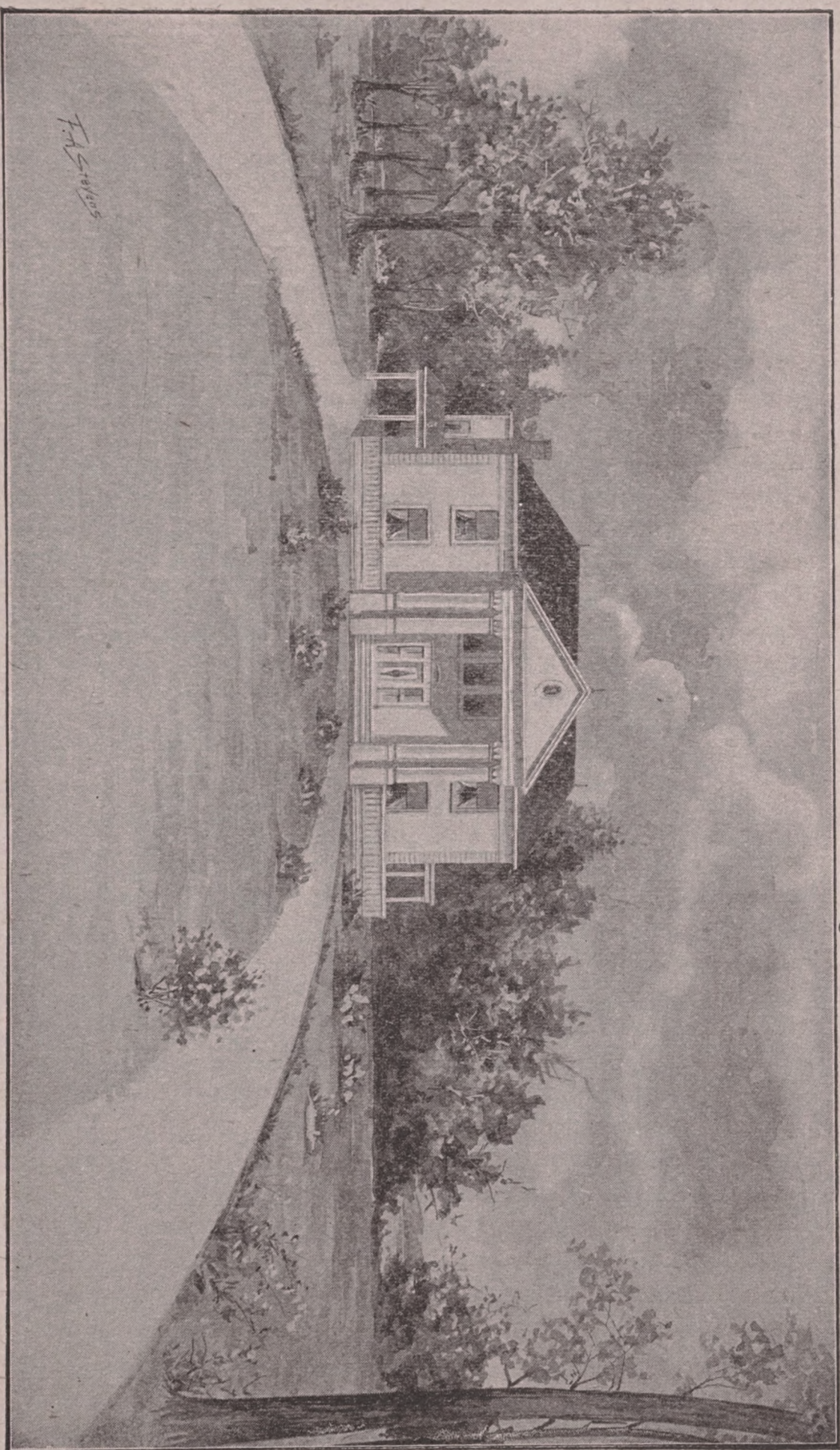
"Well," said the gratified old lady, "I took some pains with him at points when I found him deficient." And she leaned back and laughed over the memory of that interview.

Some time later, as they three still sat discussing Alicia's morning with Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, Elverson made his appearance, looking very much upset, and evidently quite feeble. Hawthorne and Alicia were greatly surprised to see him, as they had supposed he would be kept in bed for at least a few days. They all greeted him warmly, and congratulated him on his rapid recovery, but expressed their fears that his venturing out was imprudent.

"I suppose it is," he admitted in a weak tone, and flushing highly. "But," he added, looking down in nervous confusion, "I couldn't stand being shut up there. I knew you folks would be sitting here in this comfortable way, and—and—well, it seemed that I simply must be with you." As he said the last words, he glanced furtively up at Alicia, with a look that sent the blood to her cheeks; a look that was not lost upon either Mrs. Hawthorne or her son. The latter rose quietly, excused himself on the plea that he must see how things were going at the stables, and left them. His mother turned her head away until her face was hidden from the young people, and then relieved her feelings by puckering up her lips, and rubbing her nose rather violently with her fan.

Conversation was not easy after this unfortunate opening. Alicia was torn between resentment of Elverson's blunder, which placed her in a false position, and pity for his evidently shattered state. Elverson, though not fully conscious how greatly he had offended her, realized that something was amiss, and was made the more unsettled by it. The old lady, not knowing just how matters stood between the young couple, suspected that she was somewhat in the way, and was at first inclined to withdraw; but, glancing at Alicia's face, caught a look upon it which determined her to stay and see the matter through for the time.

One subject after another was opened either by Mrs. Hawthorne or Alicia, but each opening led to a no-thoroughfare, and was soon brought to a futile conclusion.



THE HOUSE OF THE HONEYMOON.

Elverson's vocabulary appeared to consist solely of monosyllables. He sat there for the most part in a gloomy silence, sometimes looking darkly out across the water, sometimes dropping his head upon his hands in pitiful weakness, and again, staring straight at Alicia for so long a time, and with such appealing despondency, that the girl grew almost hysterical in her effort to be natural. At last Mrs. Hawthorne took the matter in her own hands, and, rising, said:

"I'm sorry Mr. Elverson, but I'm afraid it is time Miss Flemming and I were dressing for dinner. We have it a little early to-day, as my son is at home for the afternoon. Can we induce you to remain and share it with us."

"Not to-day, thank you," replied Elverson, trying to cover with a wan smile his disappointment in not having Alicia left with him. "I'm hardly up to condition for dining out." Then, turning to Alicia he said:

"Cousin Kate Bascom came down to-day, and will stay at the Belvidere with me for a week or two. Will it be convenient for you and Mr. Hawthorne to join us in a little picnic on the bluff to-morrow afternoon? She is very anxious to meet you again."

"I'm not sure—" faltered Alicia, turning toward Mrs. Hawthorne as she spoke.

"Go, by all means, my dear, if you wish to," said the old lady. "I think I can promise for George."

Elverson's face brightened as he took his leave.

"That young man is in an unhappy condition," said Mrs. Hawthorne to Alicia as they entered the house. "He's a good deal like a stick of dynamite, and must be handled with great care. We don't want any explosions, do we, dear?" and she laid her hand on Alicia's arm with a touch of motherly sympathy. Alicia, who had so long known nothing of a mother's care, dropped her troubled head upon the old lady's shoulder, gave one great gasping sob, and then fled to her room. George came in just as Alicia reached to head of the stair, and his mother led him into the library, where for an hour they sat together in very serious consultation. When Alicia came down to dinner, the three met as usual, and the events of the afternoon were not mentioned, except when Hawthorne informed Alicia that he would keep the engagement his mother had made for him.

Meanwhile Elverson had returned to the Belvidere, where he found his cousin, and asked her to go to his sitting-room for a chat while he lay down to rest. Miss Bascom was a strikingly handsome young woman, a

decided blonde, with a complexion like satin, and a full, luxurious figure. In feature she showed her kinship to Elverson, even to the deep blue eyes which, like his, had in them hints of a smouldering flame likely to burst forth should the spirit be stirred too deeply.

When they were in his room, and Elverson was stretched out on a reclining chair, he startled her by saying in a tone that was almost fierce:

"Kate, you've got to help me! You have come at the very moment I need you."

Miss Bascom had seated herself in a rocker, and had picked up a book, fancying that Elverson was tired and might prefer to be quiet.

"Why, what is it, Walter, that I can do?" she asked. "All you need is rest, and freedom from worry. If I can do anything to secure these for you, I will be very glad, as you must know." And she smiled at him encouragingly.

"That's just it, Kate. I am in a state of mind where I have neither rest nor peace. Don't you remember that Alicia Flemming and I were boy and girl lovers years ago?"

"Well," said Kate, laughing at his earnestness, "I think I do remember that there was a period of softness between you two, and that I was used as a carrier of notes from one stricken soul to the other. I remember, too, that I was a rather unwilling agent in the business, for, to tell the truth, I was myself a little in love with my handsome cousin, and inclined to be jealous of the other girl."

"Kate," he began, ignoring her pleasantry, "when I met Alicia the other day, all my love seemed to spring up into a perfect agony of passion. I thought I had forgotten her, but now I love her as I never did before. I was fool enough to hope that she might be affected as I was at our meeting, and I spoke to her too soon. She is cold to me as yet, and what is worse, she is thrown into daily contact with young Hawthorne, who is immensely rich, not bad looking, and evidently attracted by her. It makes me desperate. He saved my life, but if he takes Alicia from me he would better have left me to drown."

"Mercy on me!" cried Kate. "Is it as bad as that? Nonsense, Walter! You're simply unstrung and the victim of your fevered imagination. Don't be silly."

"I may be silly, Kate, and I may be sick; but the facts remain as they are, and the results will be serious if my mind is not relieved of its anxiety. You must help me.

"I depend upon you."

"But, in what way can I help you, Walter?" Kate asked, feeling a little impatient with her cousin's intensity. "If the girl doesn't love you, I certainly can't compel her to, and if she chooses the other man, how can I hinder her?"

"Take the other man from her,—that's how," said Elverson, decidedly. "I have arranged that we four shall picnic up on the bluff tomorrow afternoon. You will meet Hawthorne. He is a little diffident, but you can draw him out. I want you to do your best to capture him. You can do it, Kate, if you try. With him out of the way, I have no doubt of my success with Alicia."

Kate laughed heartily at the proposition set before her. Then she sat for a time looking at Elverson with a look that was intent but impersonal. She was thinking out his strange proposal—thinking it out along lines he little suspected. Her cousinship to Elverson was rather remote, but her orphaned childhood had been sheltered in his home, and they had grown up together like brother and sister. From the days of babyhood, through all the years, she had loved her cousin with a fervor and persistency for which there was no accounting, even to herself. As a boy Elverson had been handsome in a delicate sort of way, and had been possessed of a certain facility both in his studies and in his social relations which had greatly impressed her; the more, perhaps, because she herself had developed very slowly both in mind and body. She could now recall the thin, rather sallow face and meagre body of which she had been so uncomfortably conscious as a child, and her shame in the sluggish action of her mind, making her find the lessons so hard that her handsome cousin found so easy.

She followed rapidly the course of events. She saw him grow more and more uncertain of himself, undecided, unreliable, as he approached young manhood. His one really great talent he cultivated in a fitful way, now plunging in with a feverish zeal, and again wasting months in neglect of it. She recalled her own unceasing efforts to spur him on, using discreetly the flattery which stimulates natures like his, and often intoxicates. It was she who had finally determined him to go to Paris, after having pictured to him for some years the advantages to be gained; and it was she who went with him, to tide him over the first months of separation from the home-life. Every year at the close of Elverson's annual visit home she had gone back to Paris with him, staying just long

enough to get him comfortably settled, and hurrying away before he could feel her a burden.

The atmosphere of the art world over there had done him good. In the presence of great masters, assisted by their instruction and inspired by their praise, he had been commendably industrious, and had made much of his gifts. When he at last came back to his native land and set up his studio in New York, Kate had noticed with great delight an apparent change in his habitual attitude towards her. One day, at a time when he was spending a couple of weeks at his parental home, he and Kate were driving. For some time he had listened to her gay chat, but made no response to her attempts to rally him. Presently he turned to her and said:

"Kate, all I am I owe to you."

"Nonsense!" she responded, though her cheeks flushed with emotion.

"No," he went on, thoughtfully, "it is not nonsense." You have devoted yourself to me, absolutely, all these years. I have not always been blind. I am not ungrateful. You have long been very beautiful. You are rich. You might have married early, and taken your pick of the best. And yet you still give to me the same undivided devotion. Do you know, Kate, I have for some time wondered—"

Just then a passing bicycle had startled the high-spirited team, and the effort to pacify them had broken into his mood. Home was reached by the time the animals were reasonably quiet, and he did not resume the subject. But the remembrance of his words had haunted her ever since.

Now this new freak of fancy had laid hold of him. Kate had remembered the desultory attentions Elverson had paid Alicia when they were all schoolmates, and how Alicia had dropped out of their lives and been forgotten. It was quite in keeping with her cousin's eccentric temperament, this sudden revival of that early fancy. The only question was how long it would last, and how best to shorten it. What could she do? To combat it would only make matters worse; he must not think her unsympathetic; and yet,—

"Why don't you say something?" demanded Elverson, irritated by her long silence.

"Sh-h-sh!" said Kate, holding her outspread hand before her, with a tragic gesture. "Don't interrupt my meditation. Remember, you have given me a serious task. I am to set a wile for the rich young villain of our drama, and rescue the beautiful heroine from the peril of

his arms. How shall I do this without a deeply laid plot? I must meet scheme with scheme, design with design, and, if it goes so far, villainy with villainy."

"O, drop the heroics! All you've got to do is just to be yourself. Talk to him. Keep him away from her. He has'n't known her long, and you can capture him if you try."

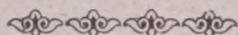
"And what will I do with him when I've got him safely on the hook?"

"Take him off and throw him overboard. You've refused a good many better men."

"But, suppose he captures me? Suppose the biter gets bitten? I'm getting along in years, and you will have your own home. What if I should accept the chance to settle down?"

Elverson raised himself, and looked at her smiling face intently for a few seconds.

"I don't think you'd do it," he finally said, dropping back on the couch. But he lay silent for a long, long time after that. Meanwhile Miss Kate Bascom did some pretty good plotting, preparatory to the coming campaign.



CHAPTER VII.

The ten o'clock boat the next morning brought an unexpected caller to the Hawthorne cottage. It was Mr. Wall. In explanation of his trip he merely said that he had been wanting a little respite from the office, and thought the sail down the bay would freshen him up, and give him the additional pleasure of a chat with Mrs. Hawthorne. He announced that he had succeeded the evening before in making definite arrangements to put his men to work the next week on the interior decoration of the house. Although the question of wall coverings had been pretty well decided, he had brought with him some samples of a new line recently placed on the market by the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Mills, and peculiarly adapted for bed-chambers and other rooms where a covering more dainty and delicate than the burlap was desirable.

Out in Mrs. Hawthorne's favorite corner of the veranda

she, Alic'a and Mr. Wall examined the samples.

"And what, for mercy's sake, do they call this beautiful stuff?" asked the old lady. "I suppose they've exercised their usual ingenuity in devising something outlandish."

"This is known as 'Krash-Ko-Na,'" said Mr. Wall.

"Well, that's not so bad. How many of these Ko-Na's does that make? I can't keep track of them all."

Mr. Wall, after the habit he had, began to count on his fingers

"There's Shel-Ko-Na, Lustra-Ko-Na, Lining-Ko-Na, Hessian-Ko-Na, Krash-Ko-Na and Ko-Na-Colors. With the exception of the Colors, and including Tapestry Burlap, Dyed Tapestry Burlap, Prepared Burlap, the Metallic Effects and the Prepared Canvas they all belong under the common trade-mark Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, and are made by the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na Mills."

"It reminds me," said the old lady, with her quizzical smile, "of the family I knew years ago. The parents were fond of the name Ann, so, as the children came, they put Ann in the name of each one. For several successive arrivals that was all right. They had Eliza Ann, Jane Ann, Sarah Ann, Lizzie Ann, Polly Ann, Mary Ann and Jerusha Ann. The last child broke the record. It was a boy. But he had to bear his share of the family fad, and he was known as Johnny Ann."

When the laugh was over, Alicia asked:

"But what does the word Fab-Ri-Ko-Na mean? Does it have any meaning?"

"You won't find it in the dictionary, my dear," said the decorator. "It's a pure invention. But to the decorating trade the word has come to mean 'the highest standard of quality.' To say that a piece of goods is Fab-Ri-Ko-Na, is equivalent to saying it is the best of its kind."

"One of the great things about Fab-Ri-Ko-Na is that you can depend on it being the standard and up to standard. The manufacturers are the originators of the idea. They are the first who put a backing on burlaps so that we could paste the woven wall coverings to the wall just as we do wall paper. Of course imitators are in the field, but, not having the knowledge or facilities needed to make goods that will be permanently satisfactory, they simply produce inferior goods, and depend on a slight difference in price to secure business. But, what's the use? What is a matter of a few cents more or less on a yard, when it's a question of dollars worth of wear and satisfaction? The average homemaker is no fool, and the

average decorator has a level head. We would rather handle something which we can confidently recommend; and those of us who bit once or twice at the 'cheap' bait, know better now."

"I noticed you mentioned 'Hessian-Ko-No,' 'Lustra-Ko-Na,' and 'Metallic Effects,' in your list of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na," said Alicia. "Can you tell me just what they are?"

"Surely, surely! Hessian-Ko-Na is a basket-weave goods, very beautiful for bordered panels, or for two-thirds treatment of walls. They are made in two-yard width only, and are intended for running around the room. The heavy weave makes it difficult to butt it as we can the strips of burlap or Krash. It is very rich in effect. The Lustra-Ko-Na is made with a lustrous special surface, and in the light and delicate tints suitable for drawing-rooms, bed-chambers, and where a particularly ornate ceiling is required. The Metallic Effects get their name from the metallic treatment of the surface of the threads, which gives the goods a soft brilliance which must be seen to be appreciated. The Lustra-Ko-Na and Metallic surfaces lend themselves peculiarly to decorative stenciling, setting out the various colors with great distinction. The Fab-Ri-Ko-Na people are all the time helping the decorator and his patrons by devising specialties. Not all their line is put in the sample books. They keep so far ahead of the other fellows that they are a procession all by themselves. Just now they are pushing something to interest the ladies who do fancy-work. Have you seen the burlap couch pillow covers, worked with raffia?"

"O, yes!" said Alicia. "I have one or two in my studio. I bought them at a store. But the raffia is not very well dyed, and the burlap is flimsy, and is already beginning to fade."

"There you have it!" exclaimed Mr. Wall. The Fab-Ri-Ko-Na couch pillow covers are made of good, well-dyed burlap, and the raffia furnished for them is the real thing. That's always the way. That's what I mean when I say that Fab-Ri-Ko-Na stands for the best in quality."

Then they took up the serious discussion of their plans for the upper rooms of the house, to determine where they might make use of the new Krash goods in place of the previously selected burlap. As the upper hallway was practically a continuation of the lower, they would carry the light green burlap on up, as they had planned; they would put burlap on George's sleeping-room, dressing-room, billiard-room and den; but in the other sleeping

rooms and dressing rooms, they would put the Krash-Ko-Na. The rooms on the lighter side of the house should be done in the more neutral tints, with stronger colors where the rooms were darker. As the rooms were not intended to open out as the rooms down stairs, but were intended for separateness and privacy, the need of a general color scheme was not so compelling. Each room could be treated individually, one in blue, one in red, one in cream or light grey, and so on. During the talk the selections were made, and both Mrs. Hawthorne and Alicia were delighted with the fine texture, delicate colors, and exquisite finish of the new goods.

They had about concluded their business affairs, and Mrs. Hawthorne had succeeded in inducing Mr. Wall to stay to lunch, when they saw Elverson coming slowly up the lawn. Mrs. Hawthorne who was not anxious to have him interrupt her visit with the decorator, and who possibly had been wishing to have Mr. Wall to herself for a time, signalled to Alicia to go and meet Elverson, and dispose of him for the present. Alicia understood, and went, but not with any appearance of eagerness. When Alicia was out of range, Mrs. Hawthorne leaned back in her easy chair, with a look of exasperation on her face, and asked a rather unexpected question.

"Do I look like a schemer, Mr. Wall?"

"Not particularly. Still, you're a woman. All women scheme more or less. It's said to be because they have always been the dependent sex. They have had to scheme. It was their only weapon against the male animal's selfishness."

"Well, I've been living up to my feminine privilege, then. And that young man, who is, I hope, making himself a dreadful bore to Miss Flemming, is the villainous marplot who threatens to bring my plans to naught."

"You are pleased with Miss Flemming, I imagine."

"Very much, indeed."

"And that means?"

"Of course it does. What else could it mean. I want her for George. I am in very uncertain health. I have occasional attacks not to be misunderstood. The day is not far away when my boy will be left without my companionship, and I am anxious that he should find some sound, sensible, straightforward girl to marry. He has never been inclined to go out in society, and has had few acquaintances among young women. It's all the better. Here is a girl with good health, a good heart,

and more than usual intelligence. She has had experience in the world, and made her way against odds. She don't know everything,—but who does? The ability and will to learn are of more account than too much knowledge that will soon be out of date, or made of no importance by the new interests or emergencies of the future. As I can't get around much, I felt it a special providence when the girl was sent here. I confess I would like to see the new house fitted as much for her as for me, and it would be my last great pleasure to have it become the House of their Honeymoon. But—” and Mrs. Hawthorne folded her hands in her lap, and looked the picture of hopeless resignation.

“Who is the intruder?” asked Mr. Wall.

“O, an artist chap—old schoolmate—friend of the family—early admirer. He'd forgotten he for years, and only chanced to meet her the day George brought her here. Took it into his fevered head to fancy himself over ears in a renewal of past love, and has haunted her ever since. Came near being drowned the other night, and George saved him. Which was fortunate for him, but not an unmixed blessing for the rest of us. The shock upset his nerves, and now he's more difficult than ever. Just in the condition to suicide, or do something worse, if crossed.”

“But what about George and Miss Flemming? Do you have any idea as to their feeling?”

“As to George, yes. The dear boy tells me everything. As to Miss Flemming, no. I can only hope. If there were no counter-attraction, I would have a good deal of confidence, but you know how it is with a woman. The stronger she is herself, the surer she is to be attracted by weakness, and when a man gets in to the condition that artist is in, she is apt to pity him, and—”

“And pity is akin to love?”

“Exactly. That's what I fear. George will be home early this afternoon and they are to go up on the bluff and have a sort of picnic dinner. By ‘they’ I mean George, Mr. Elverson, Miss Flemming and another young woman who is a remote cousin to Mr. Elverson and has just come down to board at the Belvidere, where he is staying. I haven't seen her, but I hope she has good sense, and won't become another interference with my special providence.”

Elverson was now seen taking his departure. When Alicia came back to them her face showed signs of distress in spite of her efforts to avoid it, and there was a sugges-

tion of tears in her eyes. Mrs. Hawthorne thoughtfully saved the situation.

"Suppose," she remarked, just as if the conversation had been on that line during Alicia's absence; "suppose you were going to put the Fab-Ri Ko-Na on old wall, that had been papered or white-washed. What preparation would the walls need?"

"We'd scrape them down to the hard plaster. If there were big cracks, we'd fill them; if the cracks were small we'd just sand paper the edges smooth. Any projecting points in the plaster should be rubbed down so as to get a good surface. Then a coat of sizing is all that's needed before putting on the fabrics."

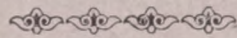
"Do the paperhangers have any trouble with putting the goods on?"

"Not at all. They paste them just as they would wall-paper, then fold the strips, and trim them with a sharp knife to get a perfectly true edge. The pasted goods are left to lie by a few minutes, so that the backing of the goods is made thoroughly alive, and then the hanging is easy. In putting on the Lining Ko-Na the wall is pasted instead of the goods. The goods are simply laid on and brushed down thoroughly."

"I should think the very wide goods would be a problem."

"O, no! It merely requires two men to handle them, one to adjust and the other to hold. In this case, too, we find it best to paste the wall instead of the goods, but we dampen the goods and let them lie a few minutes. It softens the backing, and makes it take hold."

Here the lunch bell interrupted, and the discussion of interior decoration gave way to the discussion of interior supply.



CHAPTER VIII.

The boat that brought Hawthorne from the city took Mr. Wall back. George had not been home long before a carriage containing Mr. Elverson and Miss Bascom, with a vacant seat for Hawthorne and Alicia, drove up. The occupants of the carriage did not get out while the introductions were made, so that Mrs. Hawthorne caught

only a glimpse of Kate's face.

"Decent looking person," she commented to herself, as the carriage drove away. "I should judge she has more sense than her cousin. It's certainly to be hoped."

During the ascent of the steep hill that must be climbed before you come to the real woodlands on the bluff, and during the mile or more of drive through the tree-embowered road to the spot on the edge of the bluff where Elverson had arranged for a table, some hammocks, a chair or two, and other comforts, the conversation was mostly between the two young women. Hawthorne's natural diffidence with strangers seemed strongly on him, and Elverson's intense feeling made him silent and rather glum. It was hardly a festive company in appearance, and in reality not one of the lot either felt or anticipated any great pleasure. Elverson's interview with Alicia that morning had not been satisfactory. Alicia was in dread of another of its kind. Kate was uncertain how the plot she had contrived would work out; and Hawthorne was thinking how much more he would have enjoyed a quiet little sail or drive with Alicia alone.

What they were to do after they got there, between the time of arrival and the hour at which the caterer's people would come with the eatables, no one had distinctly planned. The first few moments were spent in standing on the edge of the bluff, at a point where there were no intervening trees, and looking out over the bay, across the narrow Hook, and far out to where the sky came down to meet the sea, and the sea came up to meet the sky, and the misty horizon-cloud veiled their meeting from the vulgar gaze.

Then a path was discovered descending the face of the bluff to the beach. The descent was very sharp, but a rustic railing guarded one side of the path, and many small trees and bushes, and the roots of larger trees afforded hand-holds to which they might cling. Elverson proposed trying it, and was heartily seconded by Kate, who feared noting so much as that they should be kept close together. Alicia demurred, and Hawthorne quickly proposed that he and Miss Flemming remain where they were, while Elverson and Miss Bascom make the venture. But this so evidently irritated Elverson, who stood at the edge of the bluff reaching out his hand to Alicia, that she thought it better to humor him, and started with him on what seemed to her a perilous undertaking. Her consent seemed to put him in high spirits. His feebleness was forgotten. Had she permitted, he would gladly have

carried her down, though her weight nearly equalled his own.

There was nothing then for Hawthorne but to assist Miss Bascom, who, having had plenty of experience in mountain-climbing, really needed very little of his help.

By various innocent expedients Kate managed to delay their progress until Elverson and Alicia were far below them. Then, coming to a little level, where poor Alicia had vainly wished to wait for them, Kate seated herself, and pointedly made room for Hawthorne beside her. That young man was rather staggered by the coolness of her proceedings, but sat obediently down.

"Now Mr. Hawthorne," began Kate, "I am going to be very frank with you, and ask you to be equally so with me. Circumstances sometimes arise when it would be folly to allow conventional barriers to stand between us and the one short, straight path. I wish to confess to you that I am in love with Mr. Elverson, and have been ever since we were children together. Do you love Miss Flemming?"

Hawthorne looked at her for a moment in speechless amazement. This was frankness with a vengeance! What should he say?

Seeing him hesitate, Kate went on:

"Don't answer me unless you are perfectly willing to, but it may help us both if we come to an understanding."

"I haven't known Miss Flemming very long," Hawthorne finally said, "and I have hardly had time to—to—well, to bring myself to the point of public avowal,—but—I am hoping to win her for my wife."

"I thought as much," said Kate, "And now I wish you to join me in an experiment which may work to the advantage of all concerned. I am quite sure Miss Flemming is not in love with my cousin, and I am quite as sure that his present ardor in pursuit of her is but one of his eccentric whims. If he really loves any one it is me. I have been his companion and dependence for years, and he has been on the point of declaring a more than brotherly feeling for me. I know him perfectly. The experiment I wish to make is that you should for a time pay very marked attention to me. I will do my best to make myself as little of a bore as possible. We will neglect him as completely as we dare, and see how long it will take him to come around."

"But, what about Miss Flemming?" asked Hawthorne, still almost dazed by the directness of this perfectly poised young woman.

"That," replied Kate, laughing, "I must leave to you. If you are certain of yourself and of her, you can propose to her, and explain your temporary devotion to me. Or, you can explain to your mother my own part in the plot, and leave it to her as to whether Miss Flemming shall be told. What say you?"

"I'll do my best," Hawthorne said, looking with some embarrassment, but with no small admiration at the beautiful woman to whom he was pledging his attentions. "I have had very little practice at such things, and you may find me very stupid and awkward."

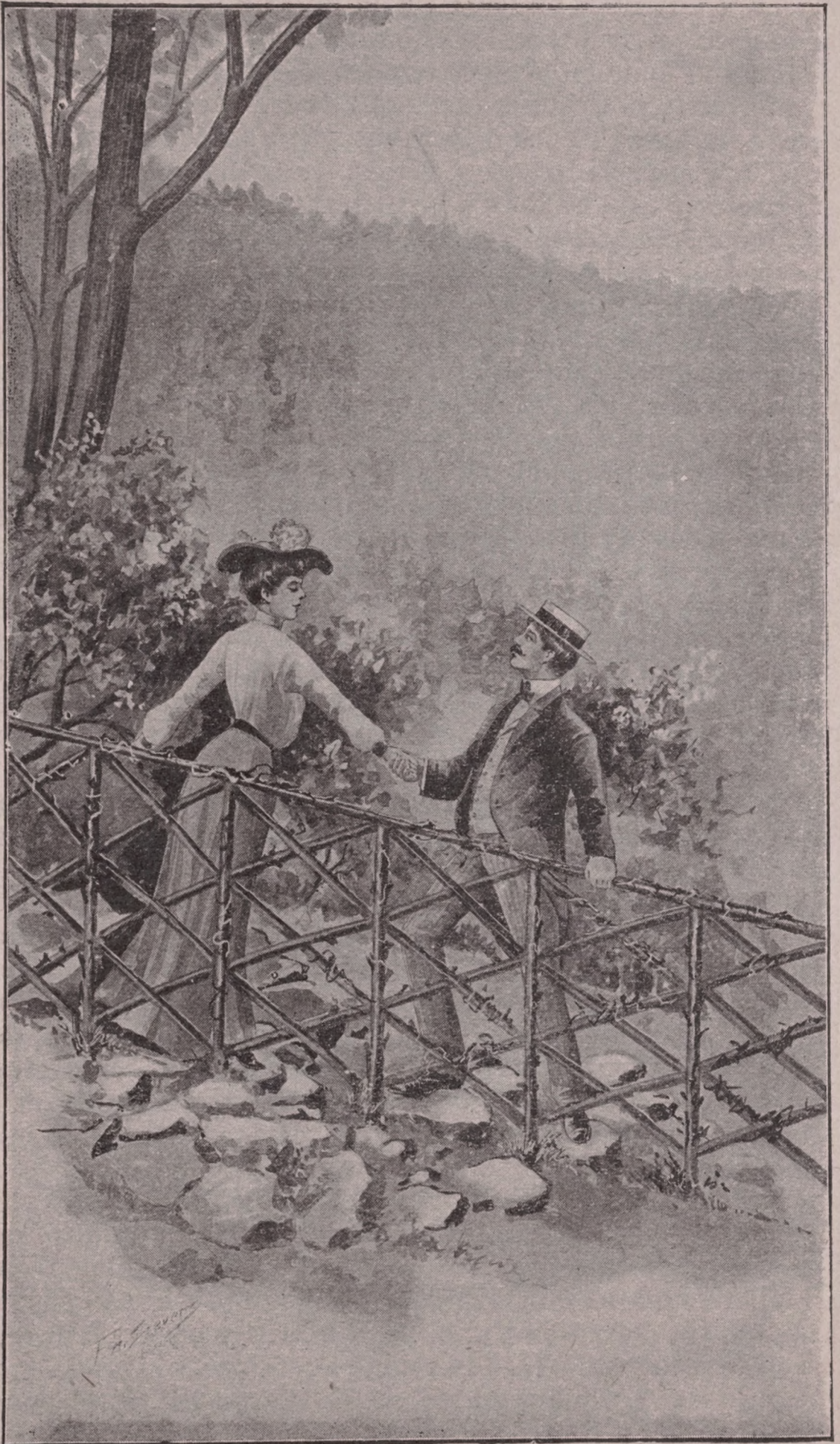
"It will be a good training for you, then. But it's time we hunted up the others. Be sure you don't forget to play your part." She glanced archly at him.

Such a glance from such eyes was in itself a safeguard against such forgetfulness. Although he knew it to be but the beginning of their little play, and that it could have nothing in it for him, Hawthorne could not help tingling to his finger tips as she swept him with her glance, and beckoned him to come. And when, a little out of breath, she stopped and leaned one hand upon his shoulder, or, in the more difficult descents permitted her soft plump hand to lie a moment in the grasp of his own strong fingers, he felt with something of a flutter that it was going to be a most delightful play, whether it turned out to be a comedy or a tragedy.

They found Elverson and Alicia. An old pier, one side of which had been torn away by the storms, projected out into the bay just where the path dropped to the beach. Alicia was sitting by herself on a rude bench at the land end of the pier, and Elverson was out on the extreme end of the feeble structure, leaning upon the wobbly railing, and moodily watching the waves as they lapped against the insecure supports. Evidently they had not gotten along well together.

Alicia rose with some commonplace remark as Hawthorne and Kate approached. Kate called to Walter, and he came to them. Then, grouped together, they made the climb back to the bluff, Hawthorne assiduously assisting Kate, leaving Alicia to Elverson, who did not seem quite so eager as when they went down. Kate kept up a merry badinage that highly diverted Hawthorne, though the others made little response to it.

The rest of the afternoon passed in much the same way. Rank injustice was done to the excellent dinner served out there in that most charming woodland. When the carriage came to take them home it was a relief to all.



That evening, on the plea of weariness, Alicia went to her room very early. She wanted to think things over. Elverson had behaved abominably during the day, and had frightened her almost out of her wits that afternoon by going out on the pier with the avowed intention of casting himself into the water. She had not dared call assistance before it was positively needed, for fear of the explanations she must then make. But she had sat there with every nerve strained to its limit.

Could it be that he really did love her as intensely as he declared? She had heard of love at first sight, and how it endured to the end. In this case his feeling had a foundation in their childhood romance. To be sure he was a weak man, compared with some others, but in his art he was a master. Was it not true of all genius that the extraordinary development on one side left a deficiency on some other side? What did a genius need, then, but someone strong enough to make the balance? Could she be that one?

She did not go closely enough into the matter to discover whether her thoughts had turned in this direction before she noticed Hawthorne's devotion to Miss Bascom or afterward. And, if the chronicler knew, why should he tell?

While Alicia was thus engaged in her room, Hawthorne and his mother were having a confidential chat down in the library.

"My dear boy," his mother said, after he had told her all, "you have undertaken a very uncertain experiment. You have precipitated a condition full of possibilities for mischief. But, as it has started, we can keep it up for a while, and watch the symptoms carefully. You don't think you dare risk proposing at once to Miss Flemming?"

"Why, mother, it would appear preposterous. I've known her only a few days, and have no reason to think she cares a straw for me."

"That's true. Well, we'll see how it all comes out. I'll explain some things to Miss Flemming in the morning."

At the same time, Kate and Elverson were together in his sitting-room, as they had been the evening before.

Elverson, very tired from the exertions and excitements of the day, had thrown himself down on his couch, with a good cigar to help steady him. Kate had gone to her room to change her dress. When she came back, noticing how worn he looked, she got another cushion for his head, and, after adjusting it and gently smoothing back his dis-

ordered hair, sat down beside him in a rocker.

"Have I pleased you today, Walter?" she asked, after waiting some time for him to speak.

"In what way?"

"Why, in my efforts to keep Mr. Hawthorne and Miss Flemming apart, and give you your desired chance with her."

"You certainly kept them apart." His tone was hardly what one would regard as complimentary. Kate ignored it, however.

"I found Mr. Hawthorne an exceptionally nice young man. There's nothing showy about him, but he's a solid, well-balanced chap, refreshingly modest and free from nonsense."

"O, I've no doubt he's got as many virtues as he has dollars. You've had only one day's observation. Of course each day will reveal new glories, and you'll have a halo around him in a week."

"Now, Walter, is that kind? Am I not doing my best in your service. Only last night you asked me to devote myself to him. And can you wish it otherwise if I find it less difficult than it might have been?"

Elverson found no answer to this, so he pretended that his cigar was imperfectly lighted, struck a match, puffed out a thick cloud of smoke, and then lay back again, blowing the smoke ceilingward in a rather petulant way. Kate drew nearer, took one of his hands in hers, and stroked it in a way some women have; a way that those particular women make very soothing to unstrung nerves. When she spoke her voice was as caressing as her touch. If Kate tried she could produce a tone that was the next best thing to a kiss.

"Walter," she said, "don't you know, dear, how much my life has always been lived for you? I am not speaking regretfully, for it has been my one great joy. To see you grow into manhood; to watch you as you rose to greater and greater heights of power and fame; to feel that I had a part, however humble, in helping you; to realize with mingled humility and pride that you were my brother, my playmate, my constant friend; that besides your parents there was none other who was so near to you as I, —all this has been mine, Walter, as I have been all yours."

"And now that the moment has come to which I have long looked forward, the moment when a sister's love could no longer be all in all to you, when your heart has gone out seeking its resting place in another heart, that your life may be made complete, do you think I fail to

sympathize as I always did in other matters affecting your welfare? You cannot, must not think so, Walter.

"Alicia is beautiful, and clever. She is poor, but you have income enough for marriage. She is a dear, delightful girl, who will, no doubt, be far more to you than ever I could be. You must not be too impetuous, or insistent. Remember, she is of an independent spirit, and will not easily yield to compulsion. Be gentle with her, and patient. Show her how strong you can be, and how tender. Then you will appeal to her admiration and sympathy, which with a girl like her represent the two hinges upon which the heart-door swings open.

"If I can help you to this happiness, I will do what may be needful. At the same time I know the real generosity of your heart. If a like happiness shall come to me, if the heart that has so long been yours and that you now need no more, shall find its shelter in the love of a good, worthy man, you will not wish it otherwise, or think disloyal one who has never failed you through all these years."

Elverson sat up. He looked at Kate, his face twitching with emotion.

"You don't mean—to say—that you have actually fallen in love—with Hawthorne—at your first meeting?" His voice seemed to come in gasps, as though he were choking.

"I referred to no one in particular," she replied. "What if it should be Hawthorne? He is a clean, reliable man, not clever like you, but trustworthy and capable of both inspiring and rewarding love. What objection can you have?"

Elverson again fell back on the cushion Kate had placed for him. He made no move, not even to put to his lips the cigar he held in his hand. He lay like one stupefied. When at last he spoke it was in a tremulous tone which he tried in vain to control.

"Please leave me now, Kate. I must be alone. I am very tired, and what you tell me is so strange that I cannot seem to grasp it. In the morning I shall be stronger."

Kate found the medicine the doctor had left, had him take some of it, and then, bending over him until her lips touched his forehead, bade him good-night and left him. She was not certain but that she had rather overdone her part in the play.

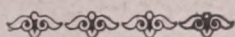
This chapter would not be complete without a record of the effect produced upon Alicia by the talk she had with Mrs. Hawthorne the next morning. The old lady explained to her what George had disclosed as to the relations

between Kate and Elverson, and unfolded the scheme by which Kate hoped to draw Elverson to herself.

“So you see, my dear, that you need have no anxiety concerning your part in the matter. Treat Mr. Elverson kindly, remembering his enfeebled condition. As he sees the growing intimacy between his cousin and my son, his attention will be diverted from you, and he will bend all his efforts to win what he never before appreciated and seems about to lose. It is a trait of human nature to belittle what is freely given and to covet that which is withheld.”

Perhaps if the shrewd old lady could have known how the revelation of this scheme affected the mind of Alicia, she would have realized that general truths have often unexpected applications.

So Miss Bascom wanted Elverson, did she? And she was willing to stoop to a plot to get him, was she? And Miss Bascom was jealous of his love for another, and hoped to torture him into a renunciation? And she—Alicia—was depended upon to snub and rebuff the love poor Walter had for his schoolday sweetheart, just to throw him back into the arms of a woman who had never aroused a similar emotion in him? Well, she—Alicia—would see. He should have fair play, at any rate, and be given an opportunity to make a free choice. Did she—Alicia—love him? She didn't know about that. She had once. What has been may again be.



CHAPTER IX.

Elverson did not leave his room that next day until about three o'clock. Kate had an appointment with her dressmaker, and went to the city, going by the same boat which carried Hawthorne to business. Of course they met. Alicia, after the morning talk on other matters, spent some hours with Mrs. Hawthorne, making up a list of the furniture and fittings for the new house. She was to begin the purchases the next week, and it was now Saturday.

When Elverson did get out, he strolled feebly down the shore until he came the rocks upon which he and Alicia sat in their first quiet talk after their years of separation. He was not now thinking so much of Alicia as of Kate, and it came as something of a shock to find Alicia sitting there as if awaiting him. His surprise was still greater when she rose with a charming smile of greeting, and stretched out her hand to steady him as he clambered over some broken stones in his path.

"You look very worn and tired, Walter," she said, as he seated himself beside her.

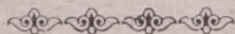
"Yes; yesterday was a little too much for my strength," he replied. As he did so he remembered what Kate had said to him about not being impetuous or insistent with Alicia. He determined that he would utter no word that day to which she might take exception. He was not conscious that his feeling about Kate made this determination easier. Perhaps it didn't. Who knoweth the mind of a man?

They talked commonplaces for a while. Then it was Alicia (O woman!) who turned the current back to their schooldays, and to some of the merry times they and their companions had enjoyed together. To a recounting of the dead was an easy step, and from that to those of the living who had made their mark in the world was another, which naturally brought them to Walter's own success, and to his experience in pursuit of it. How neatly Alicia led him on! How interestedly she listened to his stories of Parisian life, and the infinite pains taken to cultivate artistic gifts, and to his record of artistic triumphs. She soon had him at his best. His sentimental weakness was forgotten by him. He was now simply the really great artist.

But, though this was just what Alicia had regarded as the one thing wanting in Elverson heretofore; while she had resented his insistent love making, and his sentimentality, she could not now understand the sudden and complete change in him. Was Miss Bascom's plot already working? Had Hawthorne's attentions produced so immediate an effect? Had Walter's professed love for her really been a mere passing frenzy, from which he could fully recover in a single night?

When, seeing the evening boat coming in, they started for the town, how completely was the situation changed. Elverson, having started on the history of his career, had so many stories to tell of persons, places and adventures that he continued to talk with great animation as

they walked along. It was Alicia now who was silent and growingly unresponsive. As they passed up the avenue toward the Hawthorne cottage they met, at a cross street, Hawthorne and Miss Bascom returning together from the boat. Kate noticed how animated and cheerful Elverson was in Alicia's company, and Alicia was as quick to note that Hawthorne's diffidence had vanished, and that he and Kate seemed on the very best of terms indeed. Of course Alicia forced herself to be as bright as usual when under Miss Bascom's eyes. But both women relapsed into silence after they had changed partners at the terrace steps leading up to the Hawthorne cottage. Hawthorne found a constraint between him and Alicia such as he had not felt since their first meeting, and Elverson found Kate more difficult than he had ever known her. Both men put their own constructions on these signs. Hawthorne assumed that his attention to Miss Bascom had offended Alicia, and it gave him a good deal of comfort. It assured him that she at least cared for him. Otherwise it would have been a matter of indifference to her. Elverson construed Kate's mood to mean that she no longer found pleasure in his society, having yielded herself completely to Hawthorne's charms. Which was far from being a comfort to him. He had thought more about Kate in the last twenty-four hours than in all their lives together before.



CHAPTER X.

The beginning of the next week brought a change in the situation. On Monday, while Alicia and Hawthorne were in the city, Alicia busy with her selection of household goods, Elverson received a telegram from his mother announcing the sudden illness of his father, and he and Kate, after calling on Mrs. Hawthorne to make explanations, left Wavecrest at once. Later in the week Alicia received a letter from Elverson in which he stated that his father's condition was not serious, but that he and Miss Bascom would remain with his parents until his father should be able to get around again. It was a very friendly letter, but contained no outburst of sentiment.

Hawthorne gave as much time to helping Alicia as his business would permit, and they were thus thrown together a great deal, both in the city, and at Wavecrest, where they watched with interest the work of transforming the rooms of the house by means of Fab-Ri-Ko-Na. Mr. Wall had put a number of competent workmen on the job, and the transformation was wrought with amazing swiftness. Ample illustration was given of the facility with which the Fab-Ri-Ko-Na coverings could be put on the walls.

In this busy way the days went by. Two weeks saw the walls finished, as far as the mere putting on of the fabrics was concerned, and before that time the decorative artists had begun to do what seemed wonderful things in the way of stenciling beautiful dadoes, panels and friezes by the use of Ko-Na-Colors. This work Mr. Wall superintended in person. He examined the rugs Alicia had selected for the floors; the furniture and the hangings that were to make up each room. Alicia had made her selections with a view to harmony between these things and the color scheme of the walls. And now the decorator, finding what was the predominating element in the design, either in the floor covering or the draperies, or both, had the decorated portions of the walls and the ceilings carry out that element both in design and coloring. The result was beyond Alicia's dreams.

Two weeks more of urgent work found the house ready for the furnishings, and soon it began to assume a home-like look.

During these busy days, Hawthorne had been the very soul of gentlemanly kindness and attention. Elverson had written once each week, but only in a courteous, friendly vein. In his last letter he had hoped that he and Miss Bascom might rejoin them before many days. But no definite time was set, and still no further attempt at sentiment was made. So far as Alicia knew, no correspondence had passed between Hawthorne and Miss Bascom, but she could not tell how frequently he had heard from her, as his mail was received at his city office. That he said very little about her, Alicia considered a bad sign.

One evening when the house was nearing completion, as they were walking home after having been at the new house rather late, Hawthorne broke a rather long silence by saying:

"Miss Flemming, I have been very uncertain about speaking to you on a subject that is very important to me,

but which I fear may give you pain. I don't know what your feeling toward me may be, but I have learned to love you very sincerely in the few weeks we have been together, and if you could give me any hope that my love may some day be acceptable to you, I should be very happy and grateful. It is my dearest wish, as I know it is my mother's, that I may some day claim you as my wife, and that the house may be the House of our Honeymoon."

Alicia could not speak. She was surprised by the sudden coming of what she scarcely ever ventured to expect. She was still uncertain of her own heart. She had, indeed, a very deep regard for Hawthorne, and for Elverson she had felt little affection until she was piqued by Kate's scheme for capturing him. Had that feeling risen to real love? Was it on her part as evanescent a fancy as his had been for her?

"Don't feel obliged to answer me to-night, Miss Flemming," said Hawthorne, after waiting some time. "That you do not at once refuse me gives me great encouragement. I love you too truly to wish to give you a moment's pain. Do with me what your heart bids you do, but give me a fair chance."

By this time they were at home, and they parted with a mere good-night.

The next morning Elverson appeared. Kate was not with him, and he came only to pack his baggage for removal. He was decidedly improved in health. After he had made all arrangements about the care of his effects, he called again, and asked Alicia to go with him once more to their seat upon the rocks. It was a calm August morning, and the whole world seemed wrapped in a garment of beauty.

On their way to the shore Elverson told of his father's complete recovery, of the pleasant times he and Kate had had in the mountains around the old home, and of his plans for going back to Paris in a few weeks to spend a part of the winter making studies for some work he had in view.

When they were seated in the same spot where he first had sought to regain her, he sat thoughtfully for a few minutes. Then he turned to her.

"Alicia," he said, "you scorned me when we first sat here. You charged me with my neglect of you, and intimated that the child love you had for me was dead. I have come back to-day to see if anything in our week of companionship revived it. I was ill, and fretful, and I pursued you foolishly. Not until the last day of the week

did you change toward me. Was that change a sign of awakening love! Do you love me now?"

The one thing Alicia noticed most was that Walter seemed perfectly cool about this momentous question. It was not natural for him, as she had known him, to be so perfectly unimpassioned when his feelings were strongly stirred. His present lack of warmth sent a chill through her that froze forever any life that long-ago sentiment might have regained. The antipathy she had at first felt came back more strongly than ever. In contrast with this man, the sober, strong and consistent Hawthorne stood out an alluring figure toward which her heart turned never again to falter.

"No, Walter," she replied. "I do not love you now, and never can. I hope you will find some other on whom you can bestow your heart. We are not suited to each other, and nothing but unhappiness could come to us if we made the great mistake of marrying."

This was just what was needed to stir up in Elverson the feeling she had missed. He protested and pleaded. He urged all the claims he could think of. But it was too late. Her decision had been reached, and was final.

"I suppose, then, you'll marry Hawthorne," said Elverson, rather angrily, as they rose to leave the place. "You have been fitting up the House for your own Honeymoon. Is that it?"

"You have no right to speak to me in that way about it," replied Alicia, calmly; "but it may be that what you say is true."

"Don't you know it's true?" demanded Elverson, growing more excited each moment.

"No, I am not yet sure. He has asked me, but I haven't promised. But, come, Walter, we had better part now. You may say unkind things if we go any further, and I would rather part in friendship. Good-by." And she held out her hand.

He looked at her for a moment. The tears sprang to his eyes and put out the fire of anger. He took her hand, lifted it to his lips, and turned away.

When Alicia reached the cottage she found all excitement. A servant had been sent to look for her but had failed to find her. Mrs. Hawthorne had been taken with another of her seizures, and was in an unconscious condition. The doctor was with her.

Alicia hurried to the room, and busied herself with assisting the doctor. When they had done all that was possible, the doctor took her from the room.

"You'd better send for Mr. Hawthorne at once," he said. "His mother may rally for a little time, but the end is not far off. She is hardly likely to live through the night."

After the despatch had been sent, Alicia went back to the sick-room. There was little she could do—little to be done. The shock had come with such suddenness that she could not realize it. As she looked down upon the dear old face, beautiful in its framing of snow white hair, and thought of the strong mind and kindly heart now passing down into the valley of shadow, and of the long years of repressed desire which now could never see fulfillment in this world, her tears fell fast. She remembered the motherly kindness with which the dear old woman had greeted her, and of its many expressions during the weeks past. And she thought of the son to whom this mother had been so peculiarly bound, of his loneliness when that bond was broken, and of her power to go into his life if she would, and comfort him.

The hours seemed long until he came, though he made the utmost speed. Consciousness had not returned, and the doctor doubted if it would.

But he was mistaken. A little before midnight, while the doctor was sleeping in an adjoining room, and only George and Alicia were by the bedside, Mrs. Hawthorne suddenly opened her eyes. They at once bent over over her. As she saw the two faces together she smiled.

"My children," she murmured with difficulty. "My own children. You will take him from me, won't you dear?" And Alicia, her tears streaming, promised. "And the House that was to be the House of my Honeymoon shall be yours. Let it be soon,—as soon as I am laid to rest. I am going to the House not made with hands. God—bless—you."

She sank into unconsciousness again, to awake no more in this world. When the dawn came, she went out on the wings of the morning.

And, standing beside the bed on which lay the form of her whom he had lost, George Hawthorne laid upon his shoulder the tired head of her whom he had found, and with his first kisses kissed away the tears of their mutual grief.

The day after the funeral Alicia received a note from Elverson which ran as follows:

Dear Alicia :

Kate and I were married last night, and we leave for Paris Saturday. Thought you'd be interested. Hope you and Hawthorne are well. Let us know when the event is to come off.

Cordially yours,

Walter.

He did not mention then, and it was some years before she knew, that Kate had sent Elverson down on that day of his last visit, expressly to propose to Alicia, feeling that he owed it to her after all the protestations he had made, and perfectly confident that Alicia would refuse him.

Three weeks after laying her away who had planned the house, Alicia and George were quietly united, and began their honeymoon within the walls whose coverings and ornaments would always be a reminder to them of her sweet, wise spirit. And many times in the quiet years of the future they could almost fancy that her gentle presence was with them, sanctifying the commonest experiences of their lives, and causing a hallowed calm to rest upon the House of the Honeymoon.



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